

Naaman Vindicated,

As well from the

**IDOLATRIES
OF THE
House of Rimmon
IN
S Y R I A,**

As from the

**A B U S E S
OF THE
ATHEISTS and HYPOCRITES
IN
E N G L A N D.**

By *Richard Pearson*, Priest of the Church of England.

2 Kings Chap. 5. 18. and part of the 19 Verse. In this thing the Lord pardon thy Servant, that when my Master goeth into the House of Rimmon to Worship there, and he leaneth on my Hand, and I bow my self in the House of Rimmon: When I bow down my self in the House of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy Servant in this thing. And he said unto him, Go in Peace.

L O N D O N.

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Naaman Undicated ;

As well from the

IDOLATRIES

OF THE

House of R I M M O N, &c.

C H A P. I.

Containing a brief Introduction, together with the Proposal of the general Method and Design of the following Discourse.

SUCH is the strange Obstinacy and Perverseness of some ill Men, that even the best things in the World are liable to be abused and corrupted by them; Antidotes themselves may be turned into Poison, by a wrong Application; and the Word of God it self, which is the favour of Life to others, and the chief means of Salvation, may be, and frequently is, turned into the favour of Death unto those that Perish. Thus, if bad Men can but find out any one Passage of Scripture, which (tho' in direct contradiction to the purport of many other Places, and after much straining) they can make only to seem to countenance or excuse them in the doing such things, as their own vile Lusts make them first fully resolved to commit; With what ease, security and credit, do they then conclude they may apply themselves to the practice thereof? Nor was it therefore without sufficient Grounds, that the Apostle Peter, speaking of St. Paul's Epistles, tells us, *That there are some things in them, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own Destruction.* Into the Catalogue of which other Scriptures, this passage here about Naaman may certainly with as good Reason be in-

² Pet. 3. 16.

serted, as any other in the whole Bible: Since none perhaps has been more abused, or wrested to worse Purposes. From hence, some Men think themselves sufficiently authorized, to take up such loose Principles, that, come what will, or let them go where they please, they're sure enough that their Religion shall never create them the least trouble: Since let them travel the whole World over, they can every where afford to to order the Matter, and their own Behaviour, that those of every place where they happen to be, shall have no other reason, than to think their Religion the same with that of their own Country, be that what it will. From hence do they take Courage, if not down right to deride all the Doctrines of the Cross, and those that Practice them, yet, at least, to excuse, nay, even justify and applaud themselves for all their base Shiftings and Turnings, and most dishonourable double dealings both with God and Man.

As for their invisible Part, as they would fain believe themselves to have no such thing, so they seem not much to scruple the reserving that entirely for God, provided in the mean time they can but wrest a Licence from him, so to dispose of their dear outward Man upon all Occasions, as that they may be still sure to keep themselves in a whole Skin. If they can obtain thus such only, no more seems aimed at by these pretended Men of Wit, who then grow proud enough to think that they have fairly out-witted their Creator. And how do they hug themselves, and scornfully sneer out their inward Satisfaction, in having at last discovered even in those so much despised Volumes, such a rich precious Passage, whereby (as they would pretend) they can make God himself, even in the most material point, contradict his own self; who has solemnly professed, That he will not give his Honour to another, nor in his Worship admit of any Co partners.

But, *The Lord pardon thy Servant in this Matter, &c.* is the only thing like a Prayer, that can ever be observed to come from some Mens Mouths; and *Naaman, Naaman*, still becomes the chief ditty not only of the Drunkards Song, but of all other sorts of wretched Miscreants also, whether more secret or professed Enemies to Religion. If they can but force *Elisha* here, so to resolve this case of Conscience, as they would have him, he'll then prove to this sort of People as fit a Prophet, as if he had *Propheesied unto them even of Wine and Strong Drink*, nay indeed, far more acceptable and delicious. And let what will become of all the other Prophets, Apostles, or Evangelists, whilst this alone, in contradiction to all the rest, and to himself too, can be perswaded by them here, to seem to reconcile the Worship of God and that of Mam-

for this piece of service only, they easily forgive and forget all his other Righteousness; he shall then be allowed by them, to pass for the only Man of God, nay, for a Friend so particular, that they'll endeavour to strain Courtesies with him, and give this Prophet himself also free leave, to depart in Peace.

In short, whilst Atheists and Hypocrites would gladly spare all the rest of the sacred Writings, they'd easily allow this Text with their own Comments thereupon, to pass for the only useful and Canonical piece of Scripture; to which they readily apply themselves upon all Occasions, as their common Sanctuary and sure retreat.

What can be better worth the while therefore, than to endeavour to bear them off from this, which they look upon as their strongest Hold, by cutting off all their Lines of Communication therewith, and shewing them how impossible it is for them to find therein any true Refuge.

If, instead of thanks for this performance, I shall chance to meet with nothing but rage and hatred; I must needs say, 'tis no other than what was to be expected from some Men. But the best of it still is, that in this Argument, I can offend none, but either such vile Monsters only, as are first offended at the very Being of the great Authour of their Beings, or else the desperate Crew of loathsome Hypocrites, who indeed, if searched to the bottom, will be found the greatest and very worst of Atheists. Of whom how prevalent soever among us may be the Interests, or how deplorably great so ever may be their wretched numbers; 'tis to be hoped notwithstanding, that no Man, as yet, needs either to be ashamed or afraid to encounter them. For tho' we have sometimes known very innocent Treatises, pleading nothing but the Cause of Piety and Good Conscience, wholly silenced and suppressed, whilst Persons of Atheistical Principles have been freely suffer'd, in the most open manner, to diffuse their Poison, without meeting with any of those publick Censures which, in this Case, might justly have been expected; yet I shall not be so uncharitable to believe that the Empire of this sort of Men is yet become so universal, as that it will be judged a thing Criminal to contradict them. And as degenerate as the World is grown, I'm still in good Hopes, that (as I have not, so) I never shall live to see in any place of the World, any such unhappy sort of Government, the several particular Circumstances of whose Constitution shall be such, as will force the Ministers thereof, either in good earnest to believe, or so to act, as if they did believe, that the decay of Religion should be for the Interest of the State, or their main hope of a civil Establishment were chiefly

to depend upon the encrease of Atheism and Irreligion. And yet even in this sadest of all Cases, there would be this one great Comfort, That we might be most sure and confident, that such a Government must needs be but of a very short continuance.

But in the mean time therefore, under the present Constitution, which has made such publick and repeated Professions of discountenancing Atheism and Prophaneness, (whereof, whatsoever others may do, far be it from me, to question the Sincerity, or suspect any politick Composition between the Credit of seeming to do the one, and the supposed Benefit of really doing at the same time the quite contrary) How securely, and with the greatest Confidence may I now apply my self to this so highly seasonable and necessary Task, in rescuing this so much abused Scripture, and endeavouring to wrest this this dangerous Weapon out of the mad Hands of such Hypocritical or Atheistical Persons as would make use of it only to the great Scandal of others, and to their own eternal Ruine and Destruction? In order to which good end, I shall guide my ensuing Discourse according to this method, and proceed therein by these following steps.

1st. I shall consider briefly, how several have misunderstood this place of Scripture, and to what very ill Purposes they have apply'd it.

2^{dly}, Endeavour to demonstrate that it can by no means be taken in any such corrupt Sense.

3^{dly}, Give the true meaning both of *Naaman's* Petition, and of the Prophets Answer thereto.

4^{thly}, I shall shew, That supposing what some contend for, were indeed the true genuine Sense of this place of Scripture, yet from this Example we Christians could have no sufficient reason to presume of an allowance, to dissemble or comply in any of the like Cases.

Lastly, I shall shew upon what unalterable Reasons and Accounts such Compliances or Dissimulations must needs be always highly unlawful, and a Crime so hainous, that nothing can excuse that Christian, who deliberately joins, or knowingly only seems to join; with others, in such a Worship as he is sufficiently convinced is false, or in any part thereof Sinful or Idolatrous. I begin with the First, viz.

C H A P. II.

How several have misunderstood this Passage, and to what very ill Purposes they have apply'd it.

THIS Chapter contains at large the famous History of *Naaman the Syrian*, who was a Prince most renowned in his own Country, and one of the greatest Favourites of the Emperour to whom he served, and stood related. And tho' hitherto having lived in Heathenish Superstition and Idolatry, according to the general Custom of his Country; yet being (as we have probable Reasons to suppose) a Person of no ordinary Probity of Mind, and remarkable for several very commendable Qualities, which he had arrived at under the light of Nature; God *who will not break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoking Flax*, but delights to Communicate himself wheresoever he meets with any good Preparations or Capacity, was pleased here, (as 'tis very usual with him) to find out a way, both to reward and reprove in this *Syrian* Prince, those good Dispositions and Beginnings, by bringing him still to the means of a farther degree of Grace and Illumination. And accordingly, the Divine Providence was pleased to order such a wonderful Conjunction of Circumstances, as might contribute to the Releasement of this great Lord, from his own far worse Captivity, even through the means of a poor *Hebrew* Captive Maid, then waiting upon his Wife in his Family. By whose relation of the singular Gifts and Abilities of the *Israelitish* Prophet, *Naaman* was first encouraged to take a Journey into the Land of *Israel*, and there address himself to *Elisha*. By whose directions, being now Miraculously healed of the Leprosie of his Body; the consideration of so convincing an Argument, and sensible Experiment of the infinite Perfection of that Being, by whose Power this great thing was affected, did, by the divine Grace, so powerfully work upon him, as to produce still another far greater Cure of the former Disease and Leprosie of his Mind also: Whilst he is brought thereupon to the Knowledge and Confession of the one true God, and to a Resolution for the future, of publicly owning and Worshipping such his supreme Benefactor. But yet there's one thing which this new Convert and young Proselyte prudently foresees, that he could not well avoid being still engaged to practice, after his return home; and therefore first desires to be resolved by the Prophet, whether or no he might not be indulged in this one particular, without any offence

offence to God. Which scruple or case of Conscience, is both briefly stated and resolved in the Words of the Text, now chosen to discourse of. *In this thing, the Lord pardon thy Servant, that when my Master goeth into the House of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my Hand, and I bow my self in the House of Rimmon; when I bow down my self in the House of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy Servant in this thing. And he said unto him, Go in Peace.*

Now by the *House of Rimmon*, (as the learned have Conjectur'd) we are to understand no other, than the Temple of the Idol *Saturn*, who was, of all others, most highly Celebrated, and greatly worshiped by those of the Eastern Countries. And several Atheistical Spirits and Hypocritical Time-servers have in all Ages, greedily laid hold of this Example, for the better Patronising of their own wicked Practices; whilst they have been willing to understand these Words of *Naaman*, as containing a Petition of Indulgence, that he might, or at least, as a Question, whether or no he might not lawfully, together with that of the true God, join also the Worship of that Idol? Whether he might not be permitted upon Occasion, for the Satisfaction of his Master, and that he might still retain his Prince's Favour, both go along with him into the Idols Temple, and there bow down himself, to worship the Idol as formerly; or at least to seem to do so, whilst he should really, and in his Heart, there Worship the true God only? To which likewise they understand the Prophet's answering [*Go in Peace,*] as a plain Licence or Approbation of the Fact, and as much as if he had plainly said, you may very safely do so, without any offence at all to God, or at least, with confidence of his Pardon for the same.

And then from hence, such Persons readily conclude in the general, that all others also may easily obtain the same Licence and Indulgence of God, for the like Compliances and Dissimulations; and that for the securing of their temporal Interest, and especially to avoid down right Persecution, they may safely enough join with their outward Man, in such Worship as they are perswaded is Sinful, Superstitious or Idolatrous, so they do but take care all the while to keep their inward Man rightly devoted, and to direct the Intentions of their Hearts and Minds to the true God.

And indeed, if from this Passage any such conclusion could be regularly inferred, this would prove a most comfortable, and the only precious place of Scripture to some Men. For then Light and Darknels might easily be made Friends; *Jehovah* and *Belial* brought into a Communion with each other, their several claims being soon accommodated, and the Service of God and that

that of *Mammon* well enough consistent. Then they, whom the World usually accounts such, would be indeed the only true Politicians, who can side with every Wind, and change or dissemble their Practice and Profession, according to the most fashionable Religion, of those who shall happen to sway the Scepter, and can exalt or abase Men according to their Pleasure. In a Word, then must both the Apostles, and all the Primitive Christians be reckoned for the greatest Fools and Madmen, in that they so stung away their Lives, to no purpose; whilst the Doctrine of Passive Obedience would be indeed as fond, and to the full as Ridiculous, as some Men have impiously, and most prophanely endeavoured to represent it.

But, alas! the Case of *Naaman* here, is very widely, and perhaps no less wilfully mistaken, by such Men as are glad to catch hold of any thing, that may but seem to afford them any, the most feeble Support or Countenance in their double-Dealings. Who, tho' they may for the present highly applaud their own Ingenuity, in finding out such pretty Expedients, and make a shift for a while to deceive both others and themselves thereby, will yet be sure to find in the Conclusion, that God is a most jealous God, and cannot be so mocked or deceived by them; but will prove at last a consuming Fire to all such double minded Hypocrites, and most abominable Dissemblers. And so I pass now to the second general thing, which I am to endeavour to shew, *viz.*

C H A P. III.

That this Passage of Scripture can by no means be taken in any such corrupt Sense, as I have already represented; nor consequently afford any Foundation for any such Inferences to be made therefrom.

THAT *Naaman* here in these Words cannot be understood to desire, either really to Worship *Rimmon*, or *Saturn*, or any other Idol, together with the true God, nor yet to beg leave so much as to dissemble in the Case, or to endeavour to be thought to do so, may, I think, sufficiently appear from these following Arguments, grounded upon the express Context.

For in the first Place, for him to have desired this, would have been directly contrary to the present Sense of his own Mind, and the plain Convictions of his Conscience. We may I confess, meet with several in Scripture, who Worshipped the true

God in conjunction with false ones: As we read of that mixed People, whom the King of *Affyria* had planted in *Samaria*,
 * 2 King. 17. 33. in the room of the Children of *Israel*, * *That they feared the Lord, and serv'd their own Gods also.*

Zeph. 1. 5. And the Prophet *Zephaniah* likewise speaks of those, who used to *Worship and Swear by the Lord, and to Swear by Malcham also.* But yet, they who stood thus affected, did not at the same time believe, that those whom they so Worshipped, were meer Idols and false Gods, and such as could not help them, but were on the contrary (tho' very falsely) perswaded of their Ability, to help and benefit those that Served them; which was also generally the only Motive to their so Worshipping, as is evident in the Case of King *Ahab*, of whom we read, * *That he Sacrificed to the Gods of Damascus, which smote him, and he said, because the Gods of the Kings of Syria help them, therefore will I Sacrifice to them, that they may help me.* Whilst on the contrary, I'm apt to believe, we can scarce find the Example of any one, who could ever yet find in his Heart, really to Worship that Being, from whom he could entertain no Hope at all, of receiving any Advantage by his so doing. What *St. Paul* affirms of those, who adore God Almighty, being no less true also concerning the Worshippers of Idols and false Gods, *viz.* They that come unto them, must however believe, that they are, and that they are Rewarders likewise, of those that diligently seek unto them. And accordingly, we shall find, that all which either the Prophets or Apostles thought requisite towards the reducing of the Superstitious *Heathen*, was only by the most substantial Arguments, to demonstrate to them, that those whom they Worshipped were no true Gods nor had any, the least Ability in them, to help or succour their devoted Servants; as rightly concluding; that after they had once sufficiently convinc'd them of this Truth, nothing further was then necessary, to dissuade them from their Idolatries.

But *Naaman* here; was now so firmly perswaded of the Truth of these particulars, that scarce any Words could more fully express his abundant Satisfaction herein, than those which we find him use to that purpose, in the 15 Verse of that same Chapter: *Behold, (saith he) now I know, that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.* So that should he, after this have still desired to reserve to himself the Worship of any other, besides the true God only, he must have acted therein quite contrary to the plainest Convictions of his own Judgment; directly against all Reason, and without any of those Motives, which alone can be the Foundation of any mans really giving any Religious Worship to any thing.

But still in the second Place, we may also consider, That this would have been no less contrary and repugnant to those firm Purposes

Purposes and Resolutions, which he immediately before signified, about his abstaining from all Idolatrous Worship for the future: For he does in these very words, most solemnly declare and profess his Determination; *Thy Servant will henceforth, offer neither Burnt-offerings, nor Sacrifice unto other Gods, but unto the Lord.* Where, under the words (*Burnt-offerings* and *Sacrifices*) as under the most signal and noble Species, we are to understand comprehended all other Acts of external Worship whatsoever; as we find the same frequently used, according to this Latitude of Signification, in several other Places.

So that now, if we joyn all the several parts of his Speech together, it must needs sound, as if he had, after this manner, address'd himself to the Prophet: I am now abundantly convinced, that those whom I have hitherto owned and served for such, are indeed, no Gods at all; but that the God of *Israel*, is the only true one, to whom I am therefore fully purposed for the future (renouncing all the vain Idols of mine own Country) to perform all due Homage, and to bear true Faith, and constant Allegiance; and accordingly sincerely determine, never any more as long as I live, to do any one Act of Worship to any other, under that Notion. In one thing only, I must needs desire some grains of Allowance and Indulgence; and I hope God will not take it amiss, if I still retain one Rival with him; nor be so jealous, as not to give me free leave, as often as my Master goes to Worship, in the House of *Rimmon*, (which to be sure, according to his wonted Superstition, will be very frequently) that I may also go in with him, and still pay my Worship and Devotious with him, to that one most Renown'd Idol, as I have formerly been accustomed.

Now must not *Naaman*, think you, in any such Petition as this, have both been strangely inconsistent with himself, and grossly repugnant to his own Resolution? And what would this have been else, but to have Breathed both Hot and Cold with the same Breath? Than which therefore what can be imagined more unlikely, concerning a Person, who, by so many other most substantial Instances, had demonstrated himself, a most zealous and sincere Profelyte?

And still, if any should imagine, (as some have done) that *Naaman* here begged leave, to Bow down himself in the House of *Rimmon*, not indeed as designing therein, any farther Worship to that Idol, but merely to dissemble his true Faith, and as a Blinder to the Eyes of his Master, that so he might conceal his change of Religion, from the knowledge of the King of *Syria*; whilst all the time, under that Disguise, he intended with his Heart and Mind, to Worship the true God only; as a sufficient Confutation then, of any such supposal as this, it may.

In the third Place be considered, That such were his Words and Actions, and other Circumstances of his Behaviour, as plainly enough shew, that he meant to proceed most openly and ingenuously in this whole Affair, without any such under-hand Jugglings or Disguises; and that indeed he could not, either design or entertain the least Hopes of being successful in any such Disimulation. For first, he declares his renunciation of all Idols, and his purpose to Worship the true God only, so openly, and before so many Witnesses, that he could not but conclude, this would soon come to the Ears of his Master, upon his return home. And whereas, had he left his Attendance behind him, at some convenient distance, and singly betaking himself to the Prophet, had only whisper'd these things in his Ear, there might have been then, some Colour to have suspected some such Hypocritical design in him: But now on the contrary, we expressly read in the 15th. Verse, that as soon as he found himself Healed, *He returned to the Man of God, he and all his Company, and came and stood before him, and said, what there follows.* Nor could he therefore after this, in the least hope, so to Seal up the Mouths of all those, and to conjure them to such perpetual Silence, but that some one among so numerous a Retinue, (which we may well suppose attended him) would either out of zealous Superstition, or for their Interest, and to currie Favour with the King himself, be sure to acquaint him with the whole Matter. And still, suppose he could have thought his great Authority over all these, to have been sufficient to prevail with them to hold their Peace; yet even the two Mules-burden of Earth, which he carried back with him, he must needs think, would be apt to tell Tales of him to his Master, especially, when it should come to be so employed as he design'd, towards the making of an Altar, whereon to Sacrifice to the God of *Israel*, according to the *Jewish* Custom, which could not in all probability, be constantly Performed by him so secretly, as not to come at last to the knowledge of him, who, (as he was well aware) had so many Eyes and Ears, to see and hear with.

Again, should we suppose, he could be secure as to this particular also, yet that constant Absence, which he was now resolved upon, and his perpetual abstaining from those Idolatrous Offerings and Sacrifices, which were daily performed in his Country, and in which so great a Favourite as himself used formerly still to assist and accompany his Prince; even this of it self, he could not but conclude, must needs betray him. Nor could he hope, by a few external Cringes, now and then in the House of *Rimmen*, to expiate for his notorious Neglect and Contempt, of all their other numerous Idols; or to hinder the plain Discovery of his

his having brought home another Religion, than what he carried out with him.

But lastly, were it possible for us, notwithstanding all these gross Contradictions, and manifold Absurdities, to take these words of *Naaman*, as containing a Petition of this nature, yet the Prophets Answer thereto, *GO IN PEACE*, may of it self, abundantly suffice to demonstrate, that we cannot understand them in any such corrupt Sense. For otherwise we must make *Elisha* here, plainly to approve of a most gross piece of Dissimulation, and (like the false Prophets) to say *Peace*, where God hath said no *Peace*; or else, if we believe him to have been a true Prophet, we must then, make God himself (in opposition to the whole Current of his revealed Will in all other Places, as well as in direct contradiction to his own Nature) to allow of a Co-rival, or Co-partner with him in his Worship; who has yet told us, *That he will not give his Honour to another*, and that nothing is more abominable to him, than all such kind of Hypocrisie.

Nor will that Exposition of those, much mend the matter, who take these words. of the Prophet, *Depart in Peace*, not as containing any Answer at all, or Resolution, whether he might, or might not do the thing in Question; but that, being wholly silent as to this, he gave him therein only the usual Salutation at parting, and no more than if he had barely said, *Farewell*, or *God b' w'ye*. For as it seems very strange and unlikely, either that *Elisha* should so suddenly put him off, without giving him any Satisfaction, about a Point so highly important, or that *Naaman* should so contentedly depart, with a meer formal Complement, instead of a solid Resolution: So I cannot see, how the Prophet could have safely bestowed upon him, even so much as that usual Salutation, tho' we should make no more of it) had this Prince been indeed so much in Love with Hypocrisie and Dissimulation, and such a *Convert-Apostate*, as some have most injuriously endeavour'd to represent him. For St. *John*, speaking of an *Apostate*, saith; *Receive not such a one into your House, neither bid him God speed*; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil Deeds. Where, (as a Learned Author observes) this Form of Interdicting, was in imitation of the Practice of the *Jews*, in their *Anathema* against *Apostates*, who were to be excluded, not only from Commerce, but even from the smallest kind of ordinary Salutations.

But indeed, tho' I shall not deny, that this form of Speech may perhaps, in some few places, be used only as an ordinary Blessing at parting, and signify no more than a bare *Farewel*, (as it seems used, *1 Sam. 1. 17.* and *1 Sam. 20. 41.*) yet upon a diligent Consideration of all other places, wherein this Phrase, *Go in Peace*, is to be met with, immediately follow-

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ing upon any Precedent Question or Petition, we shall always find it used as an Affirmative Answer, or plain Concession of the thing enquired after, or Petitioned for; as Ex. 8. 18. *Judg.* 18. 5, 6. 2 *Sam.* 15. 9. and several other Places. And 'tis most certain likewise, both that the Prophet intended no less by it here in this Place, and that it was accordingly so understood by *Naaman the Syrian*, as an affirmative Resolution of his Scruple, or a grant of the Thing, (whatsoever it was) which he asked leave to Practise. By which I am now reminded to proceed to the third general Consideration or Enquiry, *viz.*

C H A P. IV.

What it was indeed that he asked, or what is the true Sense and Meaning of Naaman's Petition?

NOW I find three distinct Senses, according to which several learned Persons have expounded and understood this Petition and the Answer to it: All which I shall think it necessary both to recite, and also to shew, upon what Accounts and Reasons the two former of them cannot safely be rely'd upon nor received; but that the last only, is, in all probably the true genuine Exposition to be embraced.

1st. Then, some take it to refer not to the future, but to the time past, and so as to contain a Petition, or the hope of Pardon, only for what he had formerly committed, as if he had said, *In this thing the Lord forgive*, or *I hope the Lord will forgive me*, or *not punish me upon that account*, *viz.* *That I have so often heretofore accompanied my Master into the House of Rimmon, and there together with him, bowed down my self to, and Suppliated that Idol or false Deity.* To which the Prophet's answering *Go in Peace*, must then be understood, as a plain Concession of what he desired, and no less than if he had said; *Be of good Cheer, as well assured from me, in his name, That God does freely grant you Pardon for all that is past, and will not impute unto you what you did ignorantly.*

Lightfoot
in *Luc.* 4.
27.

Now, tho' as it must be acknowledg'd, that this Exposition wants not the Countenance of several Modern Interpreters of no mean Note, (among whom is the learned *Dr. Lightfoot* in particular) so it cannot be denied, but that, might the same obtain

obtain, 'twould both most effectually take away all manner of accusation or pretence from Hypocrites, to excuse or patronize their Dissimulations, by any thing of this Example, and would at the same time also well enough become *Naaman's* Circumstances, as a singular good Argument and Specimen of his being a true Convert, and of a most pious Mind, to be so solicitous about obtaining God's Pardon, for that hainous Crime of Idolatry, which he had formerly committed, tho' in the time of his Ignorance: Yet I am very apt to believe, notwithstanding all this, that this Exposition will scarcely ever be allowed to pass for genuine, by any one who shall well consider these following Reasons to the contrary.

1st. Because, tho', as to the Actions relating to *Naaman's* Master, the time may seem to be somewhat doubtfully expressed in the Hebrew Text, yet even there also *Naaman's* own bowing down himself in the House of *Rimmon*, is plainly expressed in the future. To which we may also add, that not only the vulgar Latin, and the Septuagint, but the *Chaldee* Paraphrase, and the *Syriack*, and all other Versions in the Polyglot, do read all, not in the time past, but future. So that for any particular Person, now at this distance, to go about to read it otherwise, in contradiction to so great and general Authority, may seem very justly Condemnable, as too bold an attempt of Alteration.

Again, Secondly, we may also consider, that there are some things here related by *Naaman*, as the plain Motive or Occasion of his bowing down himself in the House of *Rimmon*, which yet we cannot but acknowledge, would have been mentioned to no purpose, but must have been altogether impertinently added under that Notion, should we understand him to ask Pardon for what was already past. For what needed he then at all to have brought in his Master, or to have talked of what he used to do? Since, unless we will suppose him to have been all along a meer Hypocrite in his very Idolatry, we must needs conclude, that, tho' his Master had never gone in thither, nor there leaned upon his Hand, yet *Naaman* would have thought himself obliged, as well as others of his Country Men, frequently to have repaired to the same Temple, and there have been actually engaged to have done all he did by way of Worship, moved thereto by his own inward Affection and zealous Superstition, and out of meer Conscience towards the Idol. Whereas on the contrary, if we understand him to speak of the time to come, we shall then find, that those Circumstances are very naturally, and upon good Reason mentioned by

by him. Since, now he was Illuminated and convinced of his former Error, and become a Profelyte to the true Religion, he plainly foresees, and accordingly intimates to the Prophet, that nothing but his desire, in what he might, to gratify his Master, and to pay him those civil Respects, which he stood obliged to, by the particular Office which he held at Court, could for the future engage him, or prove any Motive or Occasion, either of his going any more to the Idols Temple, or of his doing any thing there, for which he might suspect himself, to stand in need of Pardon or Indulgence.

Lastly, He cannot be understood to relate to the time past, because so, his Words will be found much too narrow and restrained, sufficiently to answer or express the necessities of his real Case; as indeed containing neither such a full acknowledgement of his former Errors, nor such a comprehensive Petition of Pardon for the same, as was requisite for a true Convert to have made under his Circumstances. And had he respected the time past, I make no Question, but that he would have expressed himself in some such more general form as this; *The Lord Pardon me for all the manifold Idolatries I have been formerly guilty of:* Whereas now, we find him ushering in his Petition with this Preface, *Only, in this thing, the Lord pardon thy Servant, &c.* and then he instanceth only in his bowing down himself, or Worshipping in the House of Rimmon. But had he then, can we think, in all the time of his Idolatry, been never guilty of Worshipping any other false Gods; nor in any other place but in the before said Chappel only?

This cannot be imagin'd, unless we can at the same time believe either that *Naaman* had always been a mere Heretick in his own Country, or else that it was the general Custome of the *Syrians*, to Worship no other Idol but *Rimmon*: The first of which is altogether groundless, and most irrational to suppose; and the second directly contrary to plain matter of Fact, as is abundantly attested in the most authentick Records of this affair. For does not the Scripture expressly tell us, of the Gods of Damascus, and of the Gods of the Kings of Syria? And more particularly of *Baalim*, and *Ashteroth*, the Gods of Syria? And has not the learned *Selden*, a large and curious Tract DE DIS SYRIS? In which he both shews, That Idolatry it self had its first rise and beginning in Syria, and tells us likewise particularly of *Bell*, *Ashteroth*, *Dagon*, *Dammutz*, *Molech*, *Nergal*, and the golden Calf, as Idols whose Worship and Original was first owing to the *Syrians*, besides several other false Gods whose Names and Worship that People afterwards borrowed from other Nations: 'Tis plain also from *Lucian*, (who was himself

2 Chr. 28.

23.

Jud. 10. 6.

self a *Syrian*, and of the City of *Samofata*) that they Worshipped the Sun, the Moon, *Jupiter*, *Saturn*, *Venus*, *Juno*, and several other Idols borrowed from the Egyptians, who were almost infinite in their Superstitions and false Gods. The same Author likewise particularly describes both the Temples of several of the *Syrian* Idols, and what Rites they used in their several Worship of them. Luci. lib. de Deâ Syria.

Now among such a numerous company of other Idols, which the *Syrians* Worshipped, we have the greatest Reason to conclude, that *Naaman* also (who appears to have been a Person of so naturally devout a Temper) must needs have been engaged, as well as others, frequently to offer and to Sacrifice to all those Idols, and that in all or most of their Temples; and consequently that had he here designed to ask Pardon for his former Offences of this kind, he could never have thought it sufficient to have spoken only of his bowing in the House of *Rimmon*. For which he might have obtained Pardon, and have been utterly undone notwithstanding, upon the account of his other multiply'd Acts of Idolatry.

So that this Question of his, (for both the *Syriack* and *Arabian* Versions read it, *Will the Lord Pardon thy Servant?*) I say, this Question or Petition, call it which you will, must necessarily be taken to relate not to any thing he had done formerly, but to somewhat he might likely be engaged to do hereafter.

2dly, Therefore, another Exposition is that of those who rightly referring all to the future, do yet understand *Naaman* here, not at all to Question, or to desire to be resolved by the Prophet, whether what he feared to be engaged still to do in the House of *Rimmon*, were unlawful or not; but supposing him already sufficiently convinced, that his bowing there was indeed a very great Sin, do make all the force of his Petition to consist only in this, *viz.* That the Prophet would not fail to put up his Prayer unto God, for the Pardon of such his fault, if indeed he should (as he seem'd to fear) be prevailed upon to commit it. And this Exposition now seems wholly to depend upon the Authority of the vulgar Latin only, which reads my Text thus; *Hoc solum est, de quo deprecaris dominum pro servito, &c.* This is the only thing, concerning which I entreat you earnestly to pray to God in the behalf of thy Servant, that when my Master goeth into the House of *Rimmon*, that the Lord would pardon thy Servant for this thing. According to which, they understand *Naaman* here to desire, neither any such thing as leave to Sin, nor yet that God would approve of the Fact, (neither of which we may be sure, would ever have been granted by *Elisha*) but that upon consideration of his own Frailty, and the powerful Temptations he should meet with, foreseeing that he

Should not avoid relapsing into his former Sin of Idolatry, or at least of Dissimulation; he does thereupon now only beg of the Prophet, that he would by his Prayers endeavour to intercede with God for his Pardon, after he should actually so relapse. And they make likewise the Prophet's answering, *Go in Peace*, to signify nothing more than a bare Promise, that he would so Pray to God for him.

Now it must be acknowledged, that this understanding of the Words (could we allow it for genuine) may seem at first wholly to preclude Hypocrites, from all colour and pretence of inferring the lawfulness of Dissimulation, in matters of Religion, from any thing of this Example: For both *Naaman* himself was so far from thinking any such matter, that on the contrary, (according to this Exposition) he plainly supposes, that what he was likely to be engaged to practise, was in it self a very great Sin, and such for which he should therefore greatly stand in need of Pardon. And besides, there is a great deal of difference between asserting, That God may be prevailed upon to forgive, and saying, that God will never be at all offended at such an action. And farther still, it is one thing for *Elisha* to assure this *Syrian* that God would actually pardon him, and another thing to promise him only, that he would pray to God for his Pardon.

But notwithstanding all this, we shall upon better consideration find that even this Explication will not (as it may first seem to promise) so effectually remove all shelter from Hypocrites, but that they may from thence fetch some Encouragement for themselves in their Dissimulation; and that however it cannot be safely received, as containing the true Sense and Meaning of the Place. And that, for several very good Reasons to the contrary.

1st. Because it is grounded wholly upon the vulgar Latin, which is the only Translation that may seem to favour this Sense; whilst yet it has no manner of Countenance, either from the Original Hebrew, or indeed any other Version.

2^{dly}, Because it depends upon a wrong Hypothesis, as falsely supposing, that *Naaman* by his future bowing in the House of *Rimmon* intended to perform an act of external Worship to that Idol, or at least, that he was afraid of being engaged so far to dissemble his Religion for the sake of his Master. Whereas, on the contrary, I have already demonstrated, and I hope, by unanswerable Arguments from the plain context, that *Naaman* could entertain no such Hypocritical design, nor was at present troubled with any such fear or suspicion concerning himself: But on the other Hand fully determin'd to deal most openly and freely in this whole matter, and to let all the World know what Religion he was of. And that

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moreover he had already so far proceeded herein, as that now he could not well conceive any reasonable Hope of being successful in the concealment of his new Religion, by any future compliances short of down-right Apostacy.

3^{dly}. Because had *Naaman* had any such secret Intention, (as according to this supposition) to continue in a known Sin, by playing the vile Dissembler; I cannot see how *Elisha* in this Case, could safely have promised him, so much as to pray to God for his Pardon. For to be sure, 'tis never Lawful, for a Man to Promise any thing, but what it is also Lawful for him afterwards to Perform. And tho' we may sometimes, with due Submission, Lawfully Pray for what we know not whether or no God will grant; yet we can never Lawfully Pray to God, for what we are before-hand most assured, neither will nor can ever be granted by him. But now we are most certain, that God will never grant Forgiveness to any Sinner, while he continues Impenitent: And no better than such, must *Naaman* needs be accounted, whilst we here suppose him, in one Case, resolved to continue a gross Dissembler to his Lives end.

So that for the Prophet to Pray for the Pardon of one, whom he knew to be thus affected and resolv'd, would in effect, have been no other, than for him to have desired of God, that he would be reconciled unto Sin it self: Give a Man leave to be an Idolater; or not to be any longer offended with (what is naturally most abominable to him) even the most gross Hypocrisie; than which, what can be imagined more absurd?

4^{thly}. It cannot easily be conceiv'd, how any such Promise as this, (made without any concomitant Caution) should tend to any other purpose, than only to encourage the supposed Delinquent, with greater security to proceed on in his Offence, by giving him probable hopes of Impunity therein. Since he could not but conclude, that the Prophet would never Promise to Pray for that, in which he knew he might offend God, but could never hope to be heard of him, and if he could hope to be heard, himself might then also hope for safety in his continued Dissimulation and Hypocrisie.

Lastly, if it should be said, That all that the young Profelyte here desir'd, or the other promised, was to Pray for his Pardon, not absolutely, but only upon supposition of his true Repentance after his Lapse, or at least, for both these together in conjunction; tho' it must then be acknowledged, that were the Case indeed so, the Prophet might safely enough, in respect of himself, both pass his word for, and likewise make good thus much: Yet considering *Naamans* supposed Circumstances, 'tis very unlikely, that *Elisha* would make such a Promise, singly, and without adding thereto some necessary Caution. Nor can it be thought in this Case, that he would have been so very sparing of his Words,

as to have dismiss'd him (as we find he does) with a bare *DEPART IN PEACE*; but would rather have thought fit withall, to have enlarged himself towards him in some farther Advice, to this, or the like purpose: If you do hereafter commit the Sin you speak of, I Promise you so far to comply with your Request, as not to fail Praying to God, for your Repentance and Pardon thereupon. But yet, let me advise you, to have a special Care, that you do not so rely upon any thing of this, as in the least to encourage your self therefrom, in any such foul Act of Dissimulation: For th^t I may Lawfully thus Pray for you; yet I cannot tell whether or no I shall be heard therein; nor can I assure you thereupon, that God will, but have rather very great Reason to fear, that he will not grant Repentance; nor consequently Pardon, to a Wretch, who shall so deliberately Sin against the plainest Convictions of his own Conscience; and so chuse to Offend, as presuming before-hand of Repentance afterwards. And however, I must needs tell you, it is much better to chuse to die, than deliberately to do any thing of which you know you shall need to Repent afterwards. And I shall therefore, much rather Pray to God before-hand, that he would be pleased to inspire your Heart, with such noble Courage, Generosity, and Contempt of the World; as may enable you (if need be) cheerfully to forgoe all the Riches and Preferments, all the vain Honours and dangerous Favours of the Court, and to be ready to lay down your very Life, rather than ever entertain the least Thought of venturing to offend God, and wound your own Conscience, by any such base and hypocritical Compliances.

After some such manner as this now, we have good Reason to think, the Wisdom and Sincerity of the Prophet, would have prompted him to have dealt with his new Convert, had he really found him so halting, and hypocritically inclined, as the foregoing Exposition would suppose him. And these Reasons therefore I hope may suffice to shew, that the same cannot be allowed for Genuine, as well as that it was not in the Opinion of *Elisha*, any sinful Act, which *Naaman* foresees himself likely to be engaged to Practise, and concerning the Lawfulness of which he here desires to be resolved.

I shall therefore now proceed to the third and last Exposition, and that which seems to deliver the true Sense and Meaning, of this difficult and very much mis-apply'd Scripture: Of which I take that to be the true Explication, which understands *Naamans* Petition here or Question, to relate only to the right Interpretation of a civil or indifferent Action, which was liable, to be misconstrued; and supposes his future Bowing in the House of *Rimmon*, to be design'd by him meerly as a civil Act, out of Respect only to his Master, and in pure Compliance with the discharge of that particular Office, which he held at Court; as if he had said: There's one thing, which if I still continue, I
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hope God will not take it amiss at my Hands, or Punish me upon that Account: But yet before I venture on it, I desire you to satisfy me, whether he will or not. The thing I mean is this; you must know, that I being in very high Place, and Favour with the King my Master, do generally go next his Side to support him; and more especially, when he goes to Worship in the House of *Rimmon*, my Place requires, that I should still lend him my Hand or Arm to lean upon, that so he may Bow with greater Ease and State; and I thus assist him, both to prostrate himself, and to get up again afterwards; which I cannot conveniently do, without observing the same Motions and Gestures of Body that he does; not that I design thereby to do, or so much as to be thought to do any farther Worship to that Idol as formerly; but am resolv'd at the same time, openly to declare, both to my Master, and to the whole World, in plain words, as well as by all my other Actions, the quite contrary. Now, may I, think you, upon these Conditions, (if I can so satisfy my Master) still keep my Place at Court, and do what it so far requires, without any Offence to God? To which *Elisha* answering, *Go in Peace*, is as much as if he had plainly told him; *You may safely do this, without any Offence to him.*

And here now, by the way, I cannot well forbear taking occasion to mention a some what like Case, and which also had a like Resolution given of it, even by Christian and Protestant Divines too: Both which had their date no longer since a go, than about the Beginning of the Reformation. When the then Emperour of *Germany*, being about to go to *Mas*, according to Custom, commanded the *Elect*or of *Saxony* to be there, and to carry the Sword before him; for that's the Duty of the House of *Saxony* upon such solemn Occasions: He having consulted his Divines in the Case, who told him, That he might lawfully do it, since he was called upon to do his Duty, not to go to *Mas*, went accordingly, accompanied by *George* Marquess of *Brandenburg*; but none of the rest came; as *Sleiden* informs us. Which Case notwithstanding, whether it was rightly so determin'd, or otherwise, depends (as I take it) upon the time of his stay there, and the other particular Circumstances of his Behaviour, with which that Historian has left us unacquainted. Tho' afterwards consulting *Thuanus*, I am from that excellent Writer inform'd; that the *Elect*or only went into the Chappel, and leaving the Sword there, presently came away.

But I return to *Naaman*——. Tho' against this Exposition also, there may perhaps, be rais'd some Scruples and Objections, yet none of them, I think, will be found to be of any such great weight or moment, as that they can bear much way with any judicious Considerator, especially when we shall perceive how easily they may
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Sleid. Hist.
Ref. l. 7. p.
127.

be remov'd, and will admit of a very satisfactory Solution. Towards which, I shall not think unfit to bestow yet another distinct Chapter.

C H A P. V.

Wherein several Objections, which either have been, or perhaps may be made against this last, and (as I suppose) only true Exposition, are fairly proposed and answered.

AND *1st* then, Whereas it is objected, that this Sense or understanding of this Place of Scripture is wholly groundless and precarious; the Objection it self may indeed much rather appear to be so, when we shall consider what sufficient Grounds and weighty Reasons we have to embrace this Exposition; as that alone which offering no manner of Force or violence to any of the Words of the Text, does also fairly avoid all those Difficulties, Inconveniencies and Contradictions, which I have shewn to be the necessary Consequences and Attendants of any other Interpretation; and makes *Naaman* to ask nothing in the least repugnant, either to his now rectified Judgment or Resolution; nothing but what was fairly consistent both with his Belief, that there was no other God, and with his Determination also, that he would henceforth Worship no other, but only the God of *Israel*; nothing contrary either to his foregoing publick Declaration, or to any other Action or Intention of his, expressed in the Context; in a Word, nothing but what might well comport with the designs both of an honest, sincere Profelyte, and of a Wise and Prudent Man, resolved in the first place to give God his due, and not to do any thing by which he might offend Heaven; and then desirous in the next place, still to serve and gratify his Earthly Lord and Master, in what he safely might, and without danger of incurring any such Offence. Nor yet is *Elisha* thereby made subject to the great Absurdity of putting him off, with a most abrupt and sudden Farewel, without giving any answer to his Scruple: But on the contrary, (according to the plain Sense of the same Phrase in other Places) is fairly understood, to resolve his Question in the Affirmative, and yet therein not to grant any thing but what was very fit for him so to do, (according to consideration had of the particular Circumstances of the Case) and well becoming both the Wisdom, Faithfulness and Sincerity of so holy a Prophet. To all which we may also add, as a thing not a little considerable, that it cannot be imagin'd, upon what account, or to what purpose *Naaman* should talk of his bowing in the House of *Rimmon*, in this Case only, when his Master should there lean upon his Arm: if by his bowing

ing there, he had meant any thing of Religious Worship to the Idol, or had designed therein any more than a meer civil Act or Office of Service and Respect to his Master.

Whereas, if we understand it under this Notion only, it will then appear, both very natural and pertinent, that he should so speak of his Masters leaning upon his Arm, as the sole thing which could now occasion his Bowing in that Temple, or his doing any Act there for the future, that could be liable to misconstruction, or which he could think might stand in need of a right or favourable Interpretation. So, that you see, it must needs be very unjustly objected against this Exposition, that the same is altogether beg'd or precarious, when indeed we find it built upon so many very good grounds of Reason.

2^d. Whereas, it has been objected, that the several Acts of *Naaman* and of his Master, in the House of *Rammon*, being both express'd in the Original, not differently, but by one and the self-same word, why should we not therefore understand them also to have been of the same Nature, and done by both of them, out of the same design of Religious Worship? To this I Answer, that tho' it cannot be denyed, that the same *Hebrew* word is here used in, or for the Worship of the one, as well as for that of the other also, and must therefore imply the like external Gestures of Body, to have been there used by them both; yet we can by no means from thence infer any necessity of understanding the Actions of these two Persons, to be of the same kind also and nature, in respect of the design and intention of Mind, with which they were performed; which yet is always the chief thing to be considered, as that which creates a wide difference between Acts, which might otherwise be thought the same, if judged of only according to outward appearance.

In short, the word *נָפַח* does strictly and properly import not more, than a bare Bending, or Bowing down of the Body, or a Prostration thereof upon the Ground, with stretch'd out Hands and Feet, without signifying any thing at all of the particular end or design of such bodily Gestures; but leaving that wholly to be made out, and collected from the Genius and Nature of the particular Place of Scripture, wherein we find the word us'd, or from other Circumstances of the Context.

And accordingly, because by such outward Incurvation, or Prostration of the Body, 'twas Customary, among those of the *Eastern* Countries, to signify and express their inward Affection of Mind, that profound Honour and Veneration which they had, as well for their Princes and other great Persons, as also for their Idols and supposed Gods; therefore the same word which properly signifies only such Bodily Incurvation in the general, is also used in Scripture to denote, sometimes the Acts of Religi-

ous Worship, and sometimes a civil Act of Honour and Respect done unto Superiours. So that in this place likewise, it being very evident, from the circumstances of the Context, that the Bowing of the King of Syria, and Naamans Bowing in the House of Rimmon, were accompanied with so very different Intentions, the first plainly designing thereby the Worship of his Idol, whilst the other (according to his own expresse Declaration) could mean no more; than a civil Respect to his Master; there is therefore very good Reason, that tho' the same word be here apply'd to both, we should yet not understand it in the same Sense; especially, since it does frequently in other Places (and will here) so fairly and naturally admit of a different Acceptation.

And accordingly we may observe, that our *English* Translation, does very judiciously, and upon good Grounds, make a different rendring of the same *Hebrew* word; whilst it calls the Kings Act, his *Worshipping*, but Naamans only his *Bowing down himself*; plainly intimating thereby, the different Nature of the Acts, from the quite different Intentions therein.

But still, 3^{dly}. Others again, considering how expressly, and without any manner of limitation, or exception of Intention, the *Jews* were forbidden, as a thing unlawful, upon any account or pretence whatsoever, to Bow down themselves before an Idol, tho' they should at the same time declare, that they meant no Worship to it, but of God only; or design'd by that Gesture, some other civil Respect; have therefore from thence concluded, that Naaman being now of the *Jewish* Religion, must consequently commit a great Sin, even in going so far as he design'd, and in that he would Bow down himself in a Place where an Idol was, tho' he design'd no Worship to that thereby, but merely a civil Respect to his Master.

But now this Scruple or Objection, being founded upon a Mistake, or false Supposition, will therefore easily be removed, when we shall consider, that this Precept, as well as several others, was peculiarly designed for the *Israelitish* People, and given only to the natural *Jews*, while Profelytes of another Country, (as was this *Syrian*) were not necessarily obliged thereby. For otherwise we must also conclude, that Naaman sinned no less, in making use of the two Mules-burden of Earth, for the purpose he designed: Since the *Jewish* People were expressly forbidden, the Erecting of any Altar, or Offering of Sacrifice, in any other Place, than in the Temple of *Jerusalem* only, as we find Deut. 12. 13. 14. *Tell heed to thy self, that thou Offer not thy Burnt-offerings in every Place that thou seest, but in the Place which the Lord shall chuse in one of thy Tribes; there thou shalt Offer thy Burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I Command thee.* And so Lev. 17. 3, 4. *What Man soever there be of the House of Israel, that killeth*

an Ox, or a Lamb, or Goat in the Camp, or that killeth it out of the Camp, and bringeth it not unto the Door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation, to offer an Offering unto the Lord, before the Tabernacle of the Lord; Blood shall be imputed unto that Man, he hath shed Blood, and that Man shall be cut off from among his People. But now the Case was quite otherwise with the Prolitics of another Country, as Naaman was; who therefore easily obtains Licence, for the Non-observance of these two particular Prohibitions, which were given with a peculiar respect to the natural *Jews* only; and never designed indispensably to oblige other Persons also under so different Circumstances.

Lastly, It may, perhaps, be farther Objected, (and this indeed is now the only remaining Difficulty I am sensible of) That Pardon being nothing else but a Discharge from the Obligation to Punishment, and all Punishment supposing some Sin, all Forgiveness, properly so called, must needs involve under the very Notion of it, the plain supposition of some foregoing Fault or Offence, and consequently, that Naamans Bowing must needs be sinful, at least in his Apprehension; since otherwise he would never (as we find he does) talk of Pardon for the same.

To which I Answer, That tho' all this would be very true and conclusive, if the present Question were concerning Actions already done, in which alone, Pardon properly so called, can take Place; yet for a Man to ask, or for God to Promise this Favour before hand, with respect to an Action not yet done, (as according to the present Case supposed) would not be so properly a begging or granting of Pardon, in the strict Sense, as indeed a begging or granting of free Licence to do the thing, or an Assurance of the Man, that he may do it, without any Offence to God. And indeed, the Original Word *נָסַח* here used, and which we here Translate, Pardon, is so far from always excluding this more laxe Sense, that we may find it necessarily requiring the same in several other places of Scripture. Thus we read, Num. 30. 3, & 5. *If a woman vow a Vow unto the Lord, and bind her self by a Bond, being in her Fathers House in her Youth; and her Father disallow her, in the Day that he beareth thereof, then not any of her Vows, or of her Bonds, wherewith she hath bound herself shall stand: And the Lord shall FORGIVE her, because her Father disallow'd her.* The Lord shall Forgive her, that is, shall not be at all Offended at her, nor count it any Sin in her, but hold her perfectly Innocent in this matter, for not keeping that Vow, which could not be ratify'd, or oblige her, without her Fathers Consent, or in contradiction to the Duty which she ought to so near a Relation, who could justly challenge so great an Authority over her. And in the 12th. Verse likewise of the same Chapter, we find the same Phrase used in the same Sense, concerning

2 Chr. 3.
18, 19.

cerning the Wife, in the like Case, with relation to her Husband. And so when in a case of necessity, the People could not cleanse themselves, as 'twas requisite they should have done, before they eat the Passover, we find *Hezekiah* Praying for them after this manner. *The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his Heart to seek the Lord. tho' he be not cleansed according to the Purification of the Sanctuary.* And so the same Word here used in this very Case, may best be understood in the same Sense, not so much for Pardon, in the strict Sense of a known Fault, as for the favourable Interpretation of a doubtful Action: And *The Lord Pardon thy Servant,* seems here to be no more than if he had said, *Let not the Lord be offended at me, or I hope the Lord will not take it amiss, or look upon it as any Sin in me, but hold me Innocent, and take it in good part, if I do happen to bow my self in the House of Rimmon, upon that particular occasion only, and declaring my Intention therein, to be no other than such as I have now acquainted you with.*

Whereas, on the contrary, had he concluded the same to have been a Sin, he must also have concluded, that God must needs have been highly offended at him for it; nor could he then have entertained the least hope that ever the Prophet would have given him leave to venture on it. Thus, having bestowed more time and pains than ordinary, tho' I think, (considering how much it has been abused and made the common Refuge of Dissemblers) not more than was requisite, in proposing and endeavouring to establish the right Exposition of this place of Scripture, as well as in removing the several Difficulties and Objections that have been made against it. I proceed now to the next general thing designed, viz. to shew,

C H A P. VI.

That supposing that which some contend for, were indeed the true and genuine Sense of this Place; yet from this Example, we Christians could have no sufficient Reason to presume of an Allowance for any such Dissimulation or Compliance; and much less have we now any Reason, so to presume from this Example rightly understood, and considered (as it ought to be) under all its several Circumstances.

WHereas we are most assured that God is a God of Truth, to whom all lying and dissembling is most abominable; Whereas we likewise know, that he alone created the whole Man, and does therefore naturally challenge, and can be contented with nothing less than the entire Service and Worship of our Bodies, as well

well as of our Souls, and that he has professed, he will not give his Honour to another; whereas also we are most certain, that some things are so naturally and eternally Evil and Indecent, that no positive Command or Prohibition whatsoever, can alter their Nature, or make them otherwise: Were it now notwithstanding all this, either any way consistent with the eternal and unalterable Nature of Good and Evil, or reconcilable to the essential and immutable Perfection of the Divine Nature, that we should think it possible, for God to allow any thing of Hypocrisy, or to give a Licence to dissemble, and that in a Man's Religion too; nay still farther, suppose that from my Text it could be most evidently demonstrated, (as the quite contrary, I hope, has been so) that God did once since the Creation of the World, think fit, (for some most extraordinary Reasons, known only to himself) actually to give leave to one certain Person, *viz.* to this *Naaman the Syrian*, so to dissemble his Religion, by joining with his Body in Idolatry, whilst with his Soul he Worshiped the true God only; yet when all is done, such singular Licence could not in any Reason have been construed to extend any farther, or to effect any other, than the very particular Person only, to whom it was supposed so expressly given. Nor could we with any safety have from thence concluded, that it was lawful for any other besides, much less for any Christian so to dissemble. For we find the Scripture every where full of so many plain Commands to the contrary, as well as of Examples of those who are there highly commended, for chusing to die rather than so comply. Nor can we in the whole Book of God find any one Example of the other sort (besides this of *Naaman* under our present dispute) but what is there branded with some evident note of Infamy and Condemnation. So that it would by no means follow, that it is lawful for any other likewise upon occasion, to dissemble his Religion, tho' it could be evidently proved, that *Naaman* had express leave from God so to do: And how is it possible then that we should now make any such Inference from this Example, when it is on the contrary most clear, that even *Naaman* himself neither asked nor received, nor ever so much as thought of having any leave or Indulgence to practise any such Matter, but what was really of a much different Nature.

And indeed, whosoever shall first well consider the true nature of this particular Fact, together with the true State and several Circumstances of the Person, and then diligently compare all these with the Fact, State and Circumstances of those other Persons, who endeavour to abuse this Example to their own vile Purposes, will easily discover such a wide difference and vast disproportion between them in all these respects, that almost any two of the most contrary things you can think of, may as soon be reconciled together, as any thing of this Precedent can be made serviceable towards the Countenancing

ing such Hypocritical Christians, who at any time shall basely resolve to serve the Times, by outwardly communicating with Idolaters, or bodily joining in the Acts of any false or unlawful Worship.

For 1st. If we consider the Nature of the Fact it self, I have already proved, that what *Naaman* here designed, was not any Religious, but a meer civil Act, done not out of any the least honour to the Idol, but respect to his Master only, and in discharge of that particular Court-Office, which if he still held it, would necessarily require thus much from him, done not out of any design to disguise or dissemble his Religion, nor with the least intention or possibility thereby of deceiving any other Person, or of being thought to be still what he was not; but accompany'd with the most publick Profession, and plain Declaration of his being a Worshipper of the living God only, and of his utter Abhorrence and Detestation or *Rimmon*, and all other Idols whatsoever. And this Declaration likewise to be seconded; and made good by the constant course of his other suitable Actions and Behaviour, in openly praying to, Worshiping, and Sacrificing to the true God only, according to the Rites of the *Israelitish* People. From whence we may also farther conclude, that neither did he desire to continue this civil Act, out of any covetous or ambitious Temper, that he was extremely fond of retaining his high Station, or possessed with any cowardly fear of Death in so good a Cause; since by what he was resolved upon otherways, both to say and do, he could not but foresee, that he must needs very much hazard the loss both of his Riches, Preferment, and Life it self, in case so absolute a Prince as was his Master the King of *Syria*, should happen, (as 'twas most likely) to be offended thereat: But only on the other Hand, supposing that if in consideration of his former eminent Loyalty and good Services, as well as in a Sense of the great need he should still have of him, it should so fall out, (as 'twas also possible) that his Master still retained such an extraordinary Favour for him, as to be willing both to bear with his Exercise and Profession of a contrary Religion, and to continue him in the same Civil Post: then *Naaman* also would think fit, in point of Prudence, not voluntarily to foretake the same, or put himself out of place by refusing to bow down himself; as it required only in that one Case already specified; if indeed that action were to be looked upon, as only of an indifferent Nature, and such as could be performed by him, (as he hoped it might) with a safe Conscience.

And yet after all, we are also to consider, that he durst not rely upon his own Judgment, or venture upon this doubtful Action, merely of his own Head, without a cautious consultation of God's Mind herein for his full Satisfaction, or before such time as he had first received an express Licence from him by the Mouth of the Prophet; being otherways resolved and prepared, (as we have good

good Reason to conclude) utterly to have quitted both his Place, and together with that, all farther Interest in his Masters Favour, in case *Elisha* should have determined his Question in the Negative.

But now, I pray, what manner of Kindred, or Analogie is there between this Fact of *Naaman*, and that of those, who can afford outwardly to joyn themselves in such acknowledgedly Religious Acts, and to communicate in such Sinful, Superstitious, or Idolatrous Rites of Worship, as they do at the same time inwardly abhor? And this too, not only without declaring their Detestation thereof, to those to whom it chiefly concerns them to make such Declaration; but out of an intent to conceal from them, such their Abhorrence, and on purpose that they may thereby be thought to approve of their Religion; prompted thereto only by the carnal Motives of vile Covetousness and Ambition, and excessive Love of the World, or at least, only to avoid some temporal Inconvenience, or that they may keep themselves in a whole Skin: And all this, not only without all colour of any special Indulgence from God for their so doing, but in manifest opposition to, and perfect Contempt, of his most exprels and frequently repeated Commands to the contrary?

But still again, if at present any devout Christian of the higher Form, and more Zealously tender of the divine Honour, should be apt to Object it, as a thing somewhat strange and less accountable, either that *Naaman*, now convinc'd of his former Errors, should desire, (or that God should grant him) an Indulgence in a matter of this Nature; which, howsoever it must be acknowledged Lawful, can yet hardly be denyed less expedient, as being a thing looking ill, and having in it, at least, the appearance of Evil, as well as that which must needs make him more subject to the continual Temptation, and hazards of a Relapse, that he should be still so frequently appearing in an Idols Temple, and there using the same outward Gestures with his Idolatrous Country-men, tho' upon so different account: To this I Answer, That tho' I doubt not, but that it would have been both more safe and generous for *Naaman* without any more ado, to have quitted both his Place and Master, and to have resolved for ever after, to become an Inhabitant of the Land, as well as a Professor of the Religion of *Israel*; yet there are several good Reasons to be given, both why it could not well be expected otherwise, than that *Naaman* should desire to do as he did, and why God also should think fit, so to gratifie him in his Desire, if we do but consider the particular State he was under, and the several Circumstances of his Person. The great difference of all which may serve also, in some good Measure, to satisfy us, why God will not now, under the State of Christianity, allow

allow any of us to go so far as the bare Imitation of his Action, and much less grant any such extravagant Licence of down-right compliance with Idolaters, as some Hypocrites have most unreasonably endeavoured to infer therefrom.

And first then, we may consider what *Naaman* had been, and was still in his own Country, *viz.* A most Renowned Prince, mighty in Valour, and one through whom God had given Deliverance unto *Syria*, as we find all this in the first Verse of this Chapter. In short, he was a Person, whose great Merits had justly Advanc'd him to the highest Degree of Honour and Trust with the King his Master, and given him no ordinary share in his Friendship and Affections; as may easily be collected (had we no other Evidence thereof) from the extreme Sollicitude and Concern he shews, for the Cure of his Leprosie.

But now, if after this double Cure wrought upon him, *Naaman* should have chosen to return no more home, but ever after, of his own accord, have perfectly deserted the Service of his King and Country, this must needs have look'd in him, both as ungrateful and suspicious, and would have been apt to cast a very prejudicial and scandalous Reflection upon the *Jewish* Religion it self; as if a Man could no sooner become a Profelyte thereto, but he must presently forget all his former Duty and Allegiance, and cease to be any longer an useful Subject to his own natural Prince. Besides, he could not but consider, that, as he was bound in Nature, still so more strictly, by the Duties of his new Religion, not to expose his Wife and numerous Family which he had left behind him, to such eminent Danger, but to take a due Care of their Safety and Welfare, and more especially to endeavour their Conversion also. And 'twas fit for him likewise to try the Experiment however, whether the continued Miracle, which he should carry home with him, in his so wonderfully restored Health, both of Body and Mind, joyned to the good Example, and discreet Suggestions, which the opportunity of a familiar Converse would afford, might not by degrees, prove at last forcible enough, to prevail upon the King himself likewise, to approve of, and embrace the same Religion. Nor did he know, but that God might be pleas'd, through his means, to give still a far greater Deliverance unto *Syria*, than ever he had done before, tho' of a quite different, and far more excellent Nature.

These now, or the like Considerations, might somewhat serve to counter-poise those other Inconveniencies, and that Personal hazard of a Relapse, which he might incur by his return back. But however, 'tis natural for Men to have so great a Love for their own Country, especially when they happen to make so very considerable a Figure there, as did this *Syrian* Prince, that we cannot

cannot easily blame one under his Circumstances, for so determining as he did. For it was no small Tryal of the Faith of *Abraham*, the Father of the Faithful, that he could, when he had an expresse Command for it from God, so readily obey, in forsaking his own Country and his Father's House, to sojourn in a strange Land; how could it be then expected, that so young a Profelise as *Naaman*, should find in his Heart, to do the like, and much more of his own accord, and without any Command at all for his so doing?

Nor will it appear strange, either that being resolved to return, he should also desire, (if he lawfully could) still to retain the same Grandeur and high Station, and all the Advantages attending it, by obtaining leave so to Bow in the House of *Rimmon*; nor yet so strange, that God should think fit to grant his Petition, if we do but farther Consider these following Particulars.

1st. We may Consider, That even the natural *Jews* themselves, were under such a State or Dispensation, wherein they were chiefly moved to Obedience, by the Hopes and Promises of temporal Rewards and Advantages, and by the Fears and Threatnings, of temporal Evils and Inconveniencies; whilst both the Doctrine of Eternal Happiness, or Misery in a Future State after Death, and the Evidences to support their Belief, concerning the Reality of the same, were (comparatively) but sparingly, and covertly, and far more obscurely delivered to them. And consequently, it was allowable in them, to set a higher value and esteem upon the World, and outward Prosperity therein, than it is now either Lawful, or Reasonable for them to do, to whom Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel, and who Live under the great Advantage of far more clear Discoveries and Demonstrations, both of the Certainty and particular Nature of such a future State. Nor was it reasonable to expect from *Naaman* any more (at most) than from a *Jew*; nor (to be sure) near so much, as is now highly necessary in every Christian, who are justly required to be endued with a more Heroick kind of Spirit, and such Self-denial, and generous Contempt of the World, as may enable them, upon the like occasions, readily to part with any of its most specious and valuable Trifles, rather than do any thing, in order to secure the same, that may give just Offence to their Brethren, by having in it so much of the appearance of Evil.

2^{dly}. We may also Consider, that *Naaman* was no natural *Jew*, but only a Profelyte of another Nation, who therefore, as such, has a Liberty granted him, for the Non-observance of one particular Prohibition, which (as I have above observed) had always a more particular relation to the *Jewish* People, and was never
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so indispensably designed to oblige Aliens. Whereas, had he been a natural *Jew*, he could neither have reasonably expected, nor would (in all probability) have ever obtain'd the like Indulgence.

3dly, 'Tis also farther to be Considered, That he was but just now become a Profelyte, and it might be upon that account convenient, at the very first to allow something to the natural Weakness and Infirmary of a meer Beginner, rather than hazard the discouragement of so hopeful a Candidate, by the denial of him in one particular only, which as it was not sinful in its own Nature, but such as he might Practise with retention of his Sincerity, so was it also of no small Consequence, as to his Worldly concerns, and could not therefore be amiss, that he should be therein indulged, till such time however, as his own greater Zeal for, and further Confirmation in the true Religion, added to the opportunity of his making proper Applications to his Master, might at last procure him a Dispensation, not only for the future omission of that particular Ceremony, and civil Service towards his Prince, but for his total Absence also from the Idols Temple.

Lastly, This Circumstance is by no means to be forgotten, that such was his particular Country, wherein all Persons generally being already Idolaters, he could not therefore, by going so far as he did, create any occasion of Offence to any among those, where all would be sure much rather to be offended at him, for going no farther: Nor yet could he on the other hand, by this civil Action, (sufficiently declared and understood by all, upon what Account it was performed) any ways contribute towards the farther Confirmation of any in their Superstition and false Worship.

But now, by what new Art of reconciling Contradictions, shall we ever be able, to make all this agreeable to the Case of those, who by their Profession are not *Jews* but *Christians*? Nor yet such as are newly brought over to the *Christian* Faith, but Baptized therein long since, brought up from their Youth, under all the means and advantages of a thorow Instruction, and full Confirmation therein: And, who Living likewise in a Country, where very many are sure to be highly Scandaliz'd at such Examples, as well as others Confirmed thereby in their Superstitions, do notwithstanding venture, in despite of Conscience, and contempt of the plainest Prohibitions, to joyn with others in such Acts of Worship, as they verily believe to be Idolatrous or sinful, With what Face can such Wretches plead this Scripture for their Excuse? Whereas, you see, that nothing either of the matters of Fact, or of the State and Circumstances of the Persons are at all agreeable.

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And indeed, when all is done, such kind of Persons seem to make use of this Expedient, and love to be continually talking of *Naaman's Case*, merely out of a design to amuse and stop the Mouths of less intelligent Christians, who are naturally apt to upbraid them for their Levity and Diffimulation, that so they may be able with more quiet and less disgrace of the World, to pursue their secular ends, by the means of such base Compliances, rather than that they are themselves in good earnest satisfied, that there is any real Countenance for them from any thing of this Example, or that they are truly and heartily at all solicitous, or concern'd about what is lawful or unlawful for them. Nothing more usual with the Hypocrite, than to think he Sins with Credit, when he can Sin with Scripture in his Mouth, and force his Excuse even from that from whence he will find his Condemnation. And indeed of all desperate Offenders, none's like him, who when he has done a wicked thing, endeavours to avoid the Odium thereof, and the just Censures of others, by presently sculking himself behind some Text for his security; where, at the same time he secretly laughs at his own Impudence, and the Simplicity of those who can thereby be so easily put off and satisfied.

But however, as well for an Antidote against the spreading Poison and Infection of such Mens most false and dangerous Suggestions, as also for the more abundant conviction and satisfaction of all Sincere and Well-meaning Persons, I shall next proceed to my last general Proposal, *viz.*

Not only by Arguments drawn from History and matter of Fact, but also by direct positive places of Scripture, as well as from the eternal Reasons and unalterable Nature of things themselves, to demonstrate, That such Compliances or Diffimations must needs be always highly unlawful, and a Crime so heinous, that nothing can excuse that Christian who deliberately joins, or knowingly only seems to join with others in such a Worship or Service, as he is sufficiently convinced to be false, or in any part thereof Sinful or Idolatrous.

For the more Methodical performance of which Task, I shall in the first Place consider

C H A P. VII.

Who, and what kind of Persons they were, that first Taught and Practised such horrid Dissimulation in matters of Religion, and upon what Pretences.

AND indeed had Men but half that Jealousie and tender concern for the good of the Soul, as generally they have for that of the Body, and the perishing Trifles that belong to it, this single Consideration then, without any more ado, might prove a sufficient Antidote against this deadly Poison; nor would there need, almost, any other Confutation of such pernicious Doctrines, than the bare discovery and true Character of the chief Authors and Promoters thereof, whom we shall find all along to have been no better still, than either some of the most vile and infamous among all the impure Sties of accursed Hereticks, or else some main Ring-leaders in the damnable Society of such Persons, (for *Men* I know not how to call them, nor yet *Devils*) who have arrived to such a monstrous height of more than Diabolical Impudence and Impiety, as to make a Mock at that sacred Being, which Devils themselves both believe and tremble at.

Among those who have been called Christians, he who first invented and set on foot this cursed Engine of Dissimulation, so destructive to Christianity, was a Person whose very Name carries in it the black Mysteries of Hell, and who came withal from a Country so fruitful in such kind of Monsters, that our Saviour himself has given them this Character, *That they Worshiped they knew not what*. After this, I suppose, I can scarce need to tell you, that I mean no other than the wicked *Simon Magus*, or *Simon the Sorcerer*, who (tho' it had been better for him never to have been Born) had *Samaria* for the unhappy Place of his Nativity. No sooner scarce had this Wretch been Baptised, but presently he behaved himself so very unsuitable to his Profession, [that *St. Peter*, even so early, seems to question whether or no he had not already sinned himself beyond Forgiveness; and concludes him to be in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the bond of Iniquity. But afterwards he grew still

still far worse and worse, and became at last the very Master-piece of Satan, and the first great Father of almost all other Hereticks. Upon which account that glorious Martyr and Disciple of St. John, *Irenaeus*, in his Epistle to the *Trallians*, sticks not to call him, *the most famous of Nations Vice, The first begotten Son of the Devil*. And indeed in this one Engine of his, did the Prince of Darkness seem to have reposed so great a Confidence, as if he had been in hopes to have stifled Christianity in its Infancy, by raising up one *Simon* to defeat the other, and to have made this latter no less a *Peter* too, or *Rock*, whereon the Church of Christ, instead of being built, might suffer Shipwreck. I shall not need to relate, and indeed Christian Ears would by no means bear the hearing of those many other monstrous Impurities, which this Arch-Heretick both taught and practised. But of all his other most detestable Impieties, there's none seems of more pernicious Consequence at once to the very Design and Genius of the Gospel, and to all the Articles of our Christian Belief; none strikes more immediately at the very present Life and Being, as well as at the future Propagation of Christianity, than that cursed Liberty of his, which he (for ought I know, of all Men first) so freely Grants to his Disciples, not only to Dissemble, but even to deny (in whole or in part) the Faith upon occasion. We do not find that the Pagans ever went about to force the Christians to Sacrifice, or created them any Publick Disturbance upon their refusal so to do, till some time under the Reign of *Nero*. Before which therefore there could be no necessity, nor indeed occasion to make any such publick Provision against Persecution, by the inventing of a Doctrine so naturally dishonourable and contrary to the common Sentiments of Mankind, that I am perswaded it could never otherwise have once entered into the Thoughts of any one, no, not even of this vile Miscreant himself, had it not been upon the Emergency of some such urgent occasion: Nothing else but the Temptation of such Circumstances, could be the Rise or Original of so shameful a Contrivance. When *Nero* therefore began to Persecute Christians, at the same time, we may suppose, began *Simon Magus*, who was then at *Rome*, to contrive how he might best secure his Disciples from forsaking him upon that Occasion. In order to which, he taught them openly to deny the Faith, and if need should be, to Worship Idols also. For thus much *Origen* in his Book against *Celsus*, does after this manner Testifie concerning him; *That the Simon deceived many, yet from Death and Capital Punishment, which other Christians so freely underwent, for the sake of their Religion, he took care to rescue every one of his Followers, by teaching them to carry themselves indifferently as to the Worship of Idols.*

Among the other nameless Multitude of deluded Wretches, who followed this grand Deceiver, St. Irenæus has given us a particular Catalogue of some of his more chief Disciples, in those black Names of *Alexander, Saturninus, Basilides, Carpocrates, Cerinthus, Ebion, Nicolaites, Cerdon, and Marcion*, who all, not only themselves, embraced and followed, but also, setting up for Masters of Sects, most industriously propagated among others all the same pernicious Errors, and that too in particular under our present Consideration. Eusebius expressly tells us of *Basilides*, *That he taught it to be a matter of Indifference, was only to get of the Sacrifices offered unto Idols, but also boldly to deny, and even forswear the Faith in time of Persecution.* The same Eusebius likewise informs us concerning *Elxai*, who had been a chief Leader of the Sect of the *Offens*, and at last joined himself to the Party of *Ebion*, that he, not only delivered the same Doctrine to his Disciples, but furnished them also with these doughty Arguments, to maintain the same. For, saith he, *The Heretics affirm, That it is therefore no Sin at all to deny Christ in the time of Persecution, because he who is fixed in his Heart, tho' he denies him with his Mouth, in a Case of Necessity, does yet with his Heart continue steadfast in the Faith. Upon which account (they say) that such a one, so denying with his Mouth, is guilty of no Sin; since God regards the Heart much rather than the Tongue.*

Euseb. Hist.
l. 4. c. 7.

Euseb. l. 6.
c. 28.

I shall not now go about to confute or discover the Fallacies or Weakness of these pretended Reasons; but reserving this Task to a more proper Place, proceed rather to shew how justly infamous and detested the Heads of this cursed Sect were in the Judgment of the true Doctors and main Pillars of the Christian Church. When that eminent Martyr and Bishop of *Smirna*, the renowned *Polyearp*, who had also been a Disciple of St. *John*, happened, being then at *Rome*, to meet with the Heretick *Marcion*, and was ask'd by him after a fawning manner, whether or no he acknowledged him? His Answer was, (like that of *Ignatius* to *Simon*) *I acknowledge thee, saith he, to be the First-born of Satan.*

Cerinthus, (as *Epiphanius* affirms) was one of those who murmured against St. *Peter*, and resisted him for going in to *Cornelius* a Person uncircumcised; tho' expressly commanded to do so from Heaven. And both *Irenæus* and *Eusebius* relate concerning St. *John* himself, that when he was going to bath himself, and had heard that *Cerinthus* was there, presently he cried out, *let us be gone hence, lest we perish with him.* And tho' *Epiphanius* particularly applies this to *Ebion*, yet both these Authors may be well enough consistent in this Matter, since both those Hereticks might probably be at that time there together, who were observed to have been very seldom or never a sunder. Nor is it at all to be wondred at, that those Pests of Christianity, should be so abominable to the true Apostles and Apostolical Men, since by the other enormities of their Behaviour, as well as by their join-

joining indifferently upon occasion in all sorts of Religions, they had rendered the Christian Name it self so odious in the sight of many of the very Heathen; who happening to be less acquainted with the true nature of it, stood perfectly astonished at the unaccountable Levity of these Men. For according to their Doctrine, so likewise was the Conversation and Behaviour of all these *Gnostick* Sects in general; who scrupled not in the least, to Communicate in Worship either with Christians, Jews, or Pagans, nor to say or do, to profess or deny any thing, in order to their Carcass preservation, and that they might keep themselves in a whole Skin. Upon this very occasion, perhaps *Flavius Vopiscus*, in the Life of *Saturninus*, produceth out of the History of *Phlegon*, an entire Epistle of the Emperour *Adrian* to *Servianus* the Consul; in which, speaking of the wonderful Inconstancy of some Christians, he affirms of them, *That sometimes they used to Worship Serapis, with the Egyptians, sometimes Christ, and sometimes one God with the Jews, and sometimes with the Gentiles.* Where (in the Opinion of *Baronius*) we are to take it for certain, that this is to be understood of those Heretical Christians who were of the School of *Basilides* and *Carpocrates*, who were both *Alexandrians*, and there opening the School of all Impurities, were notorious for being neither firm nor constant in the Confession of Christs Name, and for teaching their Followers, that they might without any blame, deny him, and Worship the Gods of the Gentiles. Concerning the *Valentinians* also, who associated themselves to the *Gnosticks*, *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* thus informs us; *That they held there was no Necessity of openly Confessing Christ, nor of suffering Martyrdom for the Christian Religion; that they did eat of Meats offered to Idols, as a thing indifferent, not thinking themselves to be at all polluted by so doing, or by any other Pagan Compliances, when there was occasion. That they used upon the same account to revile the Orthodox Christians, because they made Conscience of such Matters, as more Idiots and simple Persons who understood nothing; vaunting of themselves in the mean time, as the only knowing and perfect ones, and Vessels of Election.*

And when this first Set of Diabolical Apostles were themselves in time extinguished, their destructive Principle for some Ages afterwards still survived in their Impious Successors. For *Priscillian* under the Reign of the Emperours *Gratian* and *Valentinian*, Composing one Heretical Monster from the several Madneses of the *Manicheans* and *Gnosticks* joined together, among several other horrid Doctrines, delivered, *That it was lawful to Lye, and to Dissemble, for the avoiding of Sufferings; that the Truth was then to be retained in a Mans Heart only; whilst the Confession of the Truth was requisite to be made only before Neighbours and Friends, and not before Strangers.* But the Emperour *Theodosius* (as I shall more largely relate hereafter) well nigh put an end to this disssembling and most perfidious Sect, by setting forth, and

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punctually Executing the most severe Edicts against them, as Enemies to Humane Society it self, no less than to all Religion in general. So that for a long time afterwards, (if I mistake not) very few or none could be found, who durst openly profess or propagate this Doctrine of Dissimulation. For tho' it is not to be questioned, but that almost every Age and Place can produce many Persons who may have prevailed with themselves outwardly to comply with such a sort of Worship, as with which, at the same time, they could by no means inwardly join and heartily agree, and so have been self Condemned in the very Action; yet, I think, but few for some Ages before us, have had the Confidence, proudly to maintain, or publickly to justify the so doing. Till now of late with us, (to the shame, and I fear, the utter confusion too of this our native Country) there unhappily sprang up one, of Fore-head enough, openly to revive, even in Print, this buried and forgotten Doctrine of those who have so long since dwelt with Devils, for their deserved recompence. The Man, I mean, is no other than that great Father of our Modern Atheists, the execrable Author of the *Leviathan*, who in that hellish Volume, like a true Casuist of *Lucifer*, thus states the Question, and returns the Answer to it, by most shamefully abusing this very Text. *If it be asked, saith he, What if we be commanded by our lawful Prince to say, That we do not believe, must we obey him, or no?* He Answers, *That a Christian Man, in matters of this Nature, if he does but believe on Christ in his Heart, has the same liberty which the Prophet Elisha granted to Naaman the Syrian. Naaman was converted to the God of Israel in his Heart, and said, 2 Kin. 5. 17. &c. Naaman here believed with his Heart in the true God; but by his outward Worship desired to seem, as if he had not believed, lest he should offend his King.*

To all which, I need say no more at present, but that you have heard of the Man and his Communication. Who, tho' he be gone sometime ago to his own Place, or (as himself is said to have Worded it when dying) into the dark Abyss, has yet also left behind him, as but too many more secret Disciples here, so one in another Country, who seems, (as if he were his eldest Son) to have taken Possession of all his Ills, and to have become (among the rest of his admirable Qualities) Inheritor also of his haughty Spirit and singular Impudence. For the learned *Puffendorff*, in a late Treatise of his Intituled, **THE NATURE OF RELIGION IN REFERENCE TO CIVIL SOCIETY**, informs us of one *Adrian Huyns*, a Civilian in *Holland*, who in a Book called **A POLITICAL EPITOMY**, among many other wild Extravagancies, has, as to this Point also, exactly Copied after the *Leviathan*. But I shall forbear prodding any particulars, or making any farther Remarks upon this Author: It being enough for my present purpose, only to observe thus much, *viz.* That this very choice of such a *Master*, is a plain Indication

Lev. c. 42.
P. 234.

of the Temper and Inclinations of the Scholar. And since we hereby know, what kind of Spirit he is of, this alone may suffice to enable us to give his Writings also a suitable Entertainment.

And indeed, (as I said at first) had we no other Arguments to prevail upon us, methinks we should be sufficiently secured from the danger of this Infection, by the meer Horrour and Extreme Prejudice, which we may justly conceive, whilst we consider the notorious ill Characters of the several Authors and Promoters of this Doctrine, whose bare Names set over it, should, methinks, be at the same time, both a sufficient distinguishing Title to the Poison, and consequently, in some Respect, a very good Antidote too: Since what else but mischief can be expected from the so known Enemies of Christianity and all Religion, and whose Behaviour, in all other Points as well as this, was so very unlike to that of those, who any way deserved the Name of Christians?

Which is the Second thing I shall now Consider, *viz.*

C H A P. VIII.

How quite contrary was the Example of our Blessed Saviour himself, and his Apostles, as well as the Practise of all the genuine Primitive Christians.

NOW as to the Example of that great Author and Finisher of our Faith, our ever Blessed Saviour, he expressly declares of himself, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the World, that I should bear Witness unto the Truth.* Which end and design of his, he fully made good and executed to the last, by laying down his most precious Life, upon that very Account, whilst he witnessed that excellent Confession before Pontius Pilate, spoken of by the Apostle; upon which he received his Sentence of Condemnation. And what was that Truth, and that Confession? No other than what is the very Foundation of all Christianity, and at the same time, so shamefully denied by our Socinians, who yet have the Face to call themselves Christians; *viz.* That he was the true Messiah, or really G O D - M A N. For upon his asserting this grand Truth; *That he and his Father were one*, the Jews took up Stones to Stone him, and directly Charge him with Blas-

Blasphemy, in that *he being, (as they supposed) a meer Man, made himself God;* as we find, *John 10. 30. 31. 33.* And so *Mat. 26. 63.* When the High-Priest, with the *Jewish Sanhedrim* sitting in Judgment on him, *had adjured him by the living God, to tell them, whether or no he was the Christ, the Son of God,* Jesus answered him, **THOU HAST SAID,** that is, *Thou hast hit on the very Truth, or, I am really the Son of God.*

Which he also immediately farther confirms, with a Threatning infinitely more terrible than Thunder and Lightning, or Ten thousand Earthquakes, enough to have dashed them into a Fit of Trembling and Consternation, far beyond that of *Belshazzar* himself, when he saw the Hand-writing upon the Wall: For it follows, *Nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man, sitting on the Right-hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven.* Where this Word, [*Nevertheless*] does not immediately relate to any thing either before, or afterwards expressed, but to something that is to be supply'd, or understood: As if he had said; Notwithstanding, or Although I very well know, that you will not now believe this my Confession; yet hereafter, to your unconceivable Sorrow and Confusion, you shall be fully Convinced of the Truth thereof, whether you will or no, when you shall see, (as most certainly you shall see) me coming in all the Majesty of Heaven, to Judge the World. And here now, (begging a little Digression from my Subject) I cannot forbear adding, That those Persons, who after the Advantage of such powerful Arguments, (which the *Jews* at that time wanted) towards the Confirmation of this Truth, by Christs Resurrection, Ascension, and sending of the Holy-Ghost, and by the so sudden, and miraculous Propagation of the Gospel all the World over, can yet find in their Hearts to deny, and even deride the real Divinity of our Saviour, are far more inexcusable than the very *Jews* themselves; must in their Hearts think him, and do by Consequence no other, than call him (I tremble to think of it) a meer Liar and Deceiver: They do in effect agree with the *Jews*, in their Charge of Blasphemy against him, justify their Actions, in his Condemnation and Crucifixion; and would in all probability, (whatsoever they may think to the contrary) have readily joyned with them in the same, had they but Lived in their Time and Circumstances.

But I return to my proper Business in hand, by next Considering, How well the Apostles also, followed this Example of their great Master, in not dissembling the Truth, nor being ashamed of the Gospel, nor terrified from the open Confession of their Faith upon all occasions, notwithstanding all the Dangers and Threatnings, that might have prevail'd upon them to the contrary. And indeed had we no other Evidences to this purpose; our bare Observation,

that the World is not still *Pagan*, as the greatest Atheist cannot deny, but that it once was so; that we now have, or know any thing of the Gospel, this alone of it self, is an undeniable Proof, and even a sensible Demonstration of that matter. Since all this, under God, must needs be wholly owing to the undaunted Courage and Constancy of those first Planters, without whose Light and faithful Preaching of the Word, we must still have continued to sit in Darkness, and in the shadow of Death. So, that even the greatest Infidels in all other Points, must yet from the visible effects thereof, easily enough give Credit to those particular Relations of the Gospel, concerning the Apostles Behaviour of this kind; *viz* That being first Beaten, and Imprisoned for Preaching Christ, and afterwards, strictly charged by the Rulers, that they should no more speak to the People of that Name, they boldly answered; * *Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye, For we cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen.* * Acts, 4. 19, 20.

And so when some of the Brethren endeavoured to dissuade St. Paul from his intended Journey to *Jerusalem*, in prospect of the imminent Dangers that would there attend him, his Answer was; * *What mean ye to weep and to break my Heart? For I am ready not to be Bound only, but also to Die at Jerusalem, for the Name of the Lord Jesus.* * Acts, 21. 13.

And what the same Apostle affirms of himself, was no less true concerning all the rest of his Collegues: *That they did not shun to declare to the People, all the Counsel of God.* One single Instance indeed to the contrary of this, we find in St. Peter, even after our Saviours Resurrection, who at one time so behaved himself, as if he designed to be thought of another Judgment than really he was, for Fear of, or to currie Favour with the *Judaizing* Christians: For which Action, notwithstanding he was most severely Reprehended by St. Paul, as he himself has given us thereof the particular Relation, *Gal. 2. 11. &c.* Where he expressly tells us, that upon this Account he withstood him to the Face, as one greatly to be Blamed for such Dissimulation, and not walking uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel. But abating this single Example, so far were they from any way concealing the Truth, or dissembling their Belief, that the Consideration of their having Acted quite otherwise, was matter of their greatest Joy and Comfort, whilst St. Paul speaking in the Name of all the rest, assures us, *2 Cor. 1. 12. Our rejoicing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity, and godly Sincerity, we have had our Conversation in the World.* Which indeed, is so true a Character of their Demeanour in general, that for constantly thus Acting and Professing, they were all at last, at several Times and Places, put to several Deaths, by their *Heathen* Persecutors: St. John alone excepted, who yet, suffering Banishment, and a Thousand other living Deaths, shined

Bright to the very last, in all the Glories of a most Triumphant Confessor, yet worth to, even more our hearts, for how some of such and such a move but soon I shall find it is to be said, and I shall find it. But did not then (may you say) this Courageous Temper of such admirable Zeal and Constancy, and undisguis'd Simplicity, did it not at length expire and die with those first Twelve most renowned Christian Worthies? No no, by no means; It still survived for some Ages afterwards, in the glorious Names, and suitable Conversations, of those holy Bishops and Martyrs, *St. Clement*, *St. Ignatius*, *Polycarp*, *Iustin*, *Irenaeus*, *Cyprian*; and in the numerous Train, and long Succession of other leading Officers in the Noble Army of Martyrs. From whence I shall single out, and chuse a little more largely to Relate some few Examples of latter Date, which, tho' perhaps they may be less known than the before mentioned, are yet no less Remarkable, nor less to my present purpose.

That good Bishop of *Tagaste*, a City in *Africa*, not far from *Hippo*, *Firmus* by Name, but much more firm in Resolution, so much was he in Love with Truth, and Christian Simplicity, and so far from that most heinous Lie of denying his Faith, that he was ready to Die, much rather than to be induced to tell that which is called an officious Lie only. For when Officers sent by the Emperour, for that end had enquired of him, concerning a certain Person, whom he had conceal'd with all the Care he could, he most ingenuously answered them, *That he could neither tell a Lie, nor yet betray the Man*: And thus constantly persisting in the same Resolution, after all the Torments they could invent to make him Suffer, they brought him at length to the Emperour, to receive from him his final Doom.

Now what shall we think of this Action? I know very well, what Censure some, who pass for Christians, would readily give of it: But let us hear, I pray, what was the Judgment of the Emperour himself in this Case, who was no other than a *Pagan*: But yet so extremely taken with the admirable Candour, Fidelity and Courage, of this so extraordinary Behaviour, that he not only presently discharged *Firmus* himself; but for his sake, freely Pardon'd the Person also, whom the Bishop had so conceal'd; * as *Augustine* gives us the Relation.

* *Aug. lib. de Mendacio.*

Again, what shall we say to the wonderful Zeal, and undisguis'd Simplicity, of *Mark* Bishop of *Aretusa*? Who chose rather to be miserably Tormented to Death by the Rabble, than either Rebuild, (as he was Commanded by *Julian*) or give the least

least Sum himself, or suffer others, who so offered, to do it for him, towards the Rebuilding of the Heathen-Temple.

In like manner, *Anthony*, an *Arian* Bishop, after he was able by no exquisiteness of Torments, to bring *Habedens*, an *Orthodox* Bishop, over to the Profession of his own impious Sect, at last, stopping his Mouth, and binding his Hands and Feet, he by force Plunged him into the Bath of Re-baptization, which he had prepared for that purpose. And then afterwards endeavoured to persuade him, that by this Washing he was made a Companion and Partaker with him of the same Heresie: But the good Bishop, by a constant Confession, most Courageously denied it, saying; O wicked *Anthony*! That can be no Condemnation unto *Dearb*, where the Assent of the Will is wanting, I, most renunciations of my Faith, did, as long as ever I had the Opportunity, loudly defend, and with my Voice confess the things which I did and do believe: But after you had Bound me with Chains, and stopping my Mouth, took away from me the Faculty of Speaking; I then transmitted the more secret Confession of my Faith, kept within the Closet of my Breast, as well as the monstrous Acts of that your Violence against me, to be both of them read by my blessed Saviour, the holy Angels themselves also therein Subscribing to me.

Admirable likewise was the Example of *Eulogius*, a Presbyter of the Church of *Corduba*, who being drag'd upon the Account of his Religion, before the chief Counsellours of a *Mahometan* King, was by one of them with whom he had been familiarly acquainted, after this manner Subtily, but yet (as the Man meant it) compassionately Accosted: That Fools and Ideots (saith he) should run themselves upon Death and Ruin, is a thing not so much to be wondered at: But as for you, who are a Man so adorned, with all the Accomplishments of Wisdom, and approved for the Honesty of your Conversation, What Madneß is it that forces you thus to fling your self into this lamentable Condition? Hearken, I beseech you to my Counsel, and do not obstinately run upon your own Destruction. Deny only by one small Word, now in this your Hour of Necessity, and then afterwards, wheresoever you can do it safely, freely exercise and enjoy your own Faith. We Promise you, that you shall no where be ever sought after.

To whom, the holy Man, (a little Smiling) thus reply'd: O that you could but know, how glorious Things are prepared for the sincere Worshipers that are of our Religion! Or that I could but once convey into yours, what I retain and feel in my own Breast, then would you be so far from endeavouring to recall me from my purpose, that your Thoughts would be wholly taken up, about how you might best

Alvari Hist.
citante Ba-
ronio. An.
Vol. 10. p.
161.]

withdraw your self from this deceitful Worldly Honour. And so he began to Preach to them the word of Life: But they refusing to hear the same, presently commanded him to be run thorow with a Sword.

Nor let any one Object against the already produced Instances, (as some have done upon the like occasion) That all these are Examples only of Bishops and other publick Ministers of the Christian Church; upon whom (they are ready to grant) there does lie some Obligation, in point of Credit as well as Interest, to chuse to suffer rather than deny or dissemble their Belief: And to this purpose, the zealous Disciples even of that grand Atheistical Patron, whom I had occasion not long ago to mention, have thought fit to treasure up this in Print among the rest of his (supposed) witty posthumous Sayings, *viz. That none ought so justly to Die for their Religion, as they that Live by it.* Whereas, may they say, there is not the same Reason, that private Christians should be thus obliged; nor is it easy, perhaps, amongst them, to produce the like Examples. Now to obviate this Objection, as well as in regard of the great natural Usefulness of such Precedents, to promote in others the like Zeal and Constancy, I shall think it worth the while, to give you still some farther Variety of the like Behaviour in all Sorts and Degrees of other Christian Professors. Concerning whom in general, *Justin Martyr*, gives us this ample Testimony, *That they can never endure so much as to seem to Worship an Idol; ἀλλὰ πάντων δίκαια ἔτι τιμωραὶ μῆξις ἐξάτε θανάτου ὑπομύουσιν ἀεὶ τὸ μὴ εἰδωλολατρεῖν, μὴ εἰδωλίσματα φαλῖν, but suffer all kind of Torments and Punishments even to the very last efforts of Death, rather than either Worship Idols, or eat of any thing Offered thereto.* And still in his second Apology to the Christians, he thus describes the Christians of his Time; *We who formerly before our Conversion, used to employ our selves in Butchering one another, do now not only not resist our Enemies, but, rather than tell a Lye, or deceive even those who inform against us, willingly confess Christ, to the loss of our very Lives: Whereas, (would our Consciences permit) we might, (as well as you Heathen are wont to do) make use of, and behave our selves according to your usual Proverb; Swear with our Tongues, remaining still unsworn in your Minds.*

*Just. Mart.
in Dial. cum
Tryph.
Jud.*

ἢ γὰρ
ὁμοῖον ἢ
ὡς λέγει ἐν
ῥήματι.

But descending now to particulars, with whom can I better begin, or more agreeably place in the fore Front, than that noble and couragious Soldier *Valentinian the Elder*? Afterwards Emperour of Rome; but at that time an Officer only in the Army of the Emperour *Julian*, who was so far from doing

ing or suffering any thing which might give any just occasion of his being thought to comply with the Heathenish Superstition, that he boldly struck the *Edile*, who had sprinkled him with lustral Water among the rest, according to the Pagans Custome, and cut out that part of his Garment, even in the sight of *Julian* the Apostate.

After him shall follow, (tho' in time he went before him) another Christian Soldier, called *Gordius*, of the City of *Cesarea*, and no less magnanimous. Whose Persecutors (as *St. Basil* gives us the History) after they could by no other means turn him aside from the Faith, set upon him at last with some plausible Arguments, persuading him that he should, if he had still a mind, retain Christ in his Heart only, and with his Mouth deny him: For God (say the) does not look upon Words, but upon the Mind it self of the Speaker; This is the only way to appease the angry Judge, and to keep God himself propitious too. But he remaining firm and immovable, answered them after this manner; I can by no means yield, to let that Tongue, the benefit of which is wholly owing to Christs Favour, so shamefully deny its Author. For with the Heart we believe unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth we make Confession unto Salvation. Do not err, God cannot be mocked Out of our own Mouthes be Judges, and from our Words he will either Save or Damn us. Did you never hear of that dreadful Sentence of our great Lord? viz. He that denieth me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven, &c. You Counsel me, that I should at present dissemble the Knowledge which I have of God. Wherefore, I pray? Is it that I may prolong this Life, add to my Days, and while off the bitterness of Death? But shall I then be contented to loose the Eternal Tears of the heavenly Life? Shall I, to avoid a little present pain, forego forever that future Crown of Righteousness and exceeding weight of Glory? Thus deliberately to choose to damn my self, and by such shameful Deceit and Fraud to purchase to my self the Eternal Torments of Hell, can be no other than down right Madnesse. Let me therefore rather give you this Advice; That if hitherto you have been mistaken, you would now at length learn Truth and Wisdom; but if you dissemble your Faith, and serve the present time, I earnestly exhort and intreat you, that laying aside Lying, you would boldly speak the Truth: For every Tongue is to confess the Glory of Christ, as well as every Knee to bow at his Name.

After these two great Leaders, I am still enabled to present to your view, all at once, a whole little Army of the same Profession, who also shewed themselves to be no less Christs faithful

faithful Soldiers. Tho' the Story be somewhat large, yet I shall give you it in full, with all its material and more considerable Circumstances, because the same will help us so much the better to understand both the great Subtlety of the Heathen to ensnare, and what was the chief thing they drove at, and how extreemly careful likewise the then Christians were, to avoid giving any just occasion of Scandal, and to abstain from all Appearance of Evil, especially in such tender Cases. Now *Julian* the Apostate being fully satisfied, by many fruitless Attempts of that kind, and Experiments so often in vain repeated, that nothing was to be done on the Christians, no prevailing upon them to comply with his Purpose, by the more common and open ways of down right Force or Threatnings, thought fit at last to betake himself to the courses of Fraud and Subtlety, to trap them, (if possible) as it were by way of Ambush or Surprise, and to overcome them by cunning Artifices and Contrivances. And accordingly, altering the Standards or Ensigns of the Emperour, which were before in use, caused to be expressed thereon, together with his own, the Images of the Pagan Gods; so that when his Christian Subjects came to signify their Reverence thereto, (as 'twas both usual, and generally concluded Innocent, for them that way to shew their respect to the Emperour) they might be at the same time forced Ignorantly, or indeliberately to Worship, or at least seem to Worship the Pagan Idols also; or else be punished as Traitors and Contemners of him for their Refusal. Which yet very many (as soon as they discovered the Cheat) chose to do, and generously suffered for it accordingly. Again, when the set time came, that the Emperour should according to Customs, give Rewards to the Soldiers, this subtle Apostate, considering how Ignorant and simple a sort of Men Souldiers generally were, and by their covetous Temper, how easily overcome with Money, before hand instructed those whom he employed to dispense his Gifts, that, having both Fire and Frankincense in a readines, they should command every one, as he came to receive his Donative, to cast in a peice of Frankincense, as if this had been formerly so ordered among all the *Romans* of old. But even upon this also many shewed a wonderful Magnanimity, utterly refusing both to offer, and to receive any gift from him. Others, trusting to the Pretences and colour of an old Law or Custom, did not in the least think themselves to have committed any Sin at all. While some again, taken with that bait of the proposed Gain, or astonished through fear of the ensuing Punishment, refused not even knowingly, to defile themselves with so great a Crime. But soon

soon afterwards, when several of all these sorts come Familiarly to converse together, and some in drinking to each other, happened to name the name of Christ, one of the Company interrupted them saying, *That it seemed very strange, that they should now invoke Christ, whom they had so lately denied, when receiving the Emperour's Donative, they had cast Frankincense into the Fire.* Upon this, many of those that had ignorantly offended taking the Alarm, and coming to understand what they had done, hastily departed together; and running up and down the Streets with Tears and Outcries, openly called God and Man to Witness, that they are Christians, and still continue in the Faith; that out of mere Ignorance of what was done, their Hands alone, whilst their Mind abhorred it, were polluted with the Pagan Superstition. But when they came at last to the Emperour himself, throwing down the Gold he had given them, at his Feet, with constant courageous Minds, they entreat of him, *That they may now receive their own proper Gift belonging to them, that is, that they may suffer Death: For it was a Matter of which they should never repent, if for the Crime they had so inconsiderately committed with the Hand they should now be punished in their whole Body for Christ's sake.* But Julian, tho' extremely troubled at this, yet envying them the Honour of Martyrdom, would not put them to Death but Banishing them his Court, struck them also out of the List of Soldiers.

Sozom. l. 5.
c. 16.

Nor were Christian Soldiers the only Persons endued with such Christian Courage and Simplicity: The primitive times afforded many thousands of all other sorts, who willingly offered up their Lives as Sacrifice, and committed their Bodies to the Sword, to Racks, to Lions, to the Flames, rather than once cast one Grain of Frankincense into the Fire of those Altars. Among whom, though doubtless, very great is the number of the wholly unrecorded, and such of whom there is now left no mention or Memory unto Posterity; yet, I fear, you would be apt to think it something like a little sort of Martyrdom, were you obliged only to hear, or barely to read over all the Relations of this kind that are still extant. Where we shall find all sincere Christians, at all times ready to undergo any kind of Death or Torment, rather than to offer to deny Christ themselves, or so much as substitute or suffer any other to do either of them for these; rather than purchase a false Certificate of the Judge concerning their having done this; nay, where any false Report was raised to that purpose, rather than not openly deny and contradict the same; in a Word, rather

rather than to say or do, or be so silent, as might give any just occasion of their seeming, or being thought to have complied with such Sinful and Idolatrous Worship.

Very remarkable to this purpose is what *St. Basil* relates, concerning one *Barlaham*, a very mean and illiterate Man, but yet most truly noble and admirable for his Christian Courage, whom after the Heathen Persecutors had first long and diverse ways (but in vain) Tormented, for refusing to Sacrifice; they at last endeavoured to circumvent him by this cunning Stratagem. First they compel him to stretch out his right Hand, with the Palm upwards, over the Fire of their Altar, and then of a suddain poured into his Hand a quantity of flaming Frankincense, expecting that the extreme pain would naturally make him shake his Hand, to be rid of it, and with the same motion also shake some of the Frankincense into the Fire, and so look to those who stood at a distance, as if he had voluntarily comply'd with them, in the use of that common Ceremony, by which they were accustomed to Worship their Idols. But this Christian *Matus* did not stir nor flinch one jot; but, as if his Arm had been made of Brass, and equally void both of Sense and Motion, he suffered the flaming Matter to eat into his Hand, till it quite burnt out of it self, rather than by the least Motion spilling any particle on the Altar, he should so be forced, but to seem therein to comply with them in the Idolatrous Ceremony.

Baron An. And here now, least any one in this case, should ground-
v. 3. p. 54. lessly attribute, more than is convenient either to the particular Temper of the Man, or to the advantage of his Sex, I shall add hereto one parallel Instance, even of a Woman, who upon the same occasion, and under the same Tryal, shewed her self no less Triumphant. For *Cyrilla*, who suffered at *Cyrene* in *Egypt*, is certainly worthy of eternal Memory. Who, under the Persecution of *Maximinus*, having had hot burning Coals mixed with Frankincense, placed upon her Hand, most steadfastly held them there in like manner for a long time together, least, by the slightest Motion shaking down any thereof, she might seem to have offered to the Idol. And so she was afterwards cruelly torn in Pieces.

After

After these Examples now, what shall we say or think of those Men, who, more delighting themselves in the newer name of *Protestants*, than in that of *Christians*, do also, upon the like occasions, allow themselves the Liberty of a new, and indeed quite contrary behaviour to all these venerable Precedents? I speak of those Persons among us, who, travelling into foreign Countries out of no absolute Necessity neither, but only to encrease their Wealth, or, perhaps, merely for their Pleasure and Recreation; yet when they are once there, rather than incur any considerable danger, which their own folly too first brought them to encounter with; it may be, rather than suffer a small Affront; Nay, sometimes, rather than not satisfy their vain Curiosity; can afford to cringe, and bow, and kiss, or do any thing else with the outward Man, that they know will be thought a Compliance; nay, on set purpose, that they may seem and be thought actually to comply with such Practices, as they are fully perswaded at the same time to be sinful, and even Idolatrous, and of which they pretend to have really an utter abhorrence in their Hearts.

But some mens *new Light*, and *new Faith* too, quite void of old *Patience*, and far more truly called *Presumption*, may (it's likely enough) enbolden them to endeavour to justify themselves, by condemning all these unfashionable Examples, as the rash and indiscreet Actions of private persons, who had more Zeal than Knowledge, and went, upon their own heads, much farther than they were any way really obliged to. Whereas (may they object) did your Bishops and publick Governours of the Church, who understood the Christian Duty, did they require any such strictness from all Believers? Or did they not rather indeed, in their publick Councils and Canons, allow some greater Liberties unto common Christians? Which brings me to a third Consideration, *viz.*

C H A P. IX.

How generally condemned they are by the publick Canons, and what severe Censures the Primitive Church passed and inflicted upon Time-servers and Dissemblers of their Faith.

WHere we may observe, that tho' it was the main Care and Study of those antient Worthies, how they might best perfect and keep up an exact Discipline in the Church, without which (as they wisely considered) it had been wholly impossible that Christianity should have long subsisted under the then Circumstances; yet we shall likewise find, that they very well knew also how to temper their Severities with Mildness, granting all rea-

sonable and convenient Liberties, and sometimes abating of some Rigors upon a just Occasion, and shortening the allotted time of Punishments, as they judged it most conducive to the good of the Penitents themselves, or necessary (according to different circumstances) towards the Advantage and Edification of the Church in general.

To flie in the time of Persecution, (as well it might, our Saviour himself advising thereto) was a Liberty allowed by all Universally, *Tertullian* only excepted, who, after carried away with the Error of the *Montanists*, rigidly deny'd the Lawfulness thereof: But was utterly condemned for his so doing, by all others of the Orthodox Church in general. Who also, when they saw it most expedient, (like *St. Cyprian*, for a while) freely made use of that Liberty, no less to the commendation of their own Prudence, than to the benefit and advantage of the Christian Commonwealth. Nor did those holy and Wise conductors require, that any should, when uncalled upon, needlessly, and of their own accord offer themselves up as Christians to the *Pagan* Magistrates, but rather discouraged and forbad this practice, as arguing a zeal too Intemperate, and favouring of Rashness and Presumption. To which purpose *St. Cyprian* expressly thus adviseth: *Let none of you unnecessarily and of his own accord present himself to the Gentiles: But being apprehended and delivered up to them, he ought then courageously to speak, what the Lord shall in that hour direct him to; Qui nos confiteri magis voluit, quam profiteri, Who would have us to confess only, rather than so profess.*

They in like manner generally concluded it not unlawful, that a Christian Man, (making use of the Covetousness of his Judge, to defeat his Cruelty) should purchase his safety by a Summ of Money, provided it was merely so obtained, without his otherwise saying or doing any thing dishonourable to or inconsistent with his Profession. Tho' indeed the Council of *Eliberis* (the most severe of any) did pass some Censure even upon such Persons.

But then as to the Case of those commonly called by the Antients *Libellatici*, who, tho' they had neither deny'd nor sacrificed, yet purchased of the Magistrate a false Certificate concerning their having done either of these, and kept and produced the same for their security upon occasion, all the Primitive Bishops no less than *St. Cyprian*, are justly most severe in their Condemnation.

The punishment they allotted to Idolaters, or those who deny'd the Faith, was to be cast out from the Communion of the Church; to be forbidden the Assemblies of the Faithful; To be obliged to extraordinary Fastings; To prostrate themselves at the feet of those who went in at the Church Porch; To acknowledge themselves cast out as Salt that had lost its Savour; To beg their Prayers with Tears and Lamentation; and to exercise many other Acts of Humility and Mortification, for several years together, more or less, according to different

a St. Cyprian Epist. 83.

b Cyprian lib. de lapsis.

ferent Times and Places, as well as the different manners and circumstances of their Offending. In the *Roman* and *African* Churches there was a time when they never admitted them to Peace, who, after Baptism, had once lapsed into Idolatry: And when afterwards they did consent to some Relaxion, yet even then they were never reconciled to the Church, till either they lay upon their Death-beds, or had suffered a very long and rigorous Penance. Nor did they ever think fit to impose this course of Repentance any more than once; For who-soever relapsed a second time, could never be re-admitted to Church Communion, but was to expect his pardon from God alone.

The Council of *Eliberis* or *Elvira* forbids Christians, not only to ascend the Capital, in order to Sacrifice thereon, but even at a distance, so much as to behold that *Pagan* Worship, inflicting no less than ten years Penance upon such Offenders.

c 59. Canon. Concil. Elib. apud Du Pin. v. 1. p. 244.

The seventh Canon of the Councils of *Ancyra* and *Neocæsarea* imposed two years Penance upon those, who were present at the Feasts, made in Honour of the Idols, tho' they carried their own Meat thither, not eating of any thing that had been so offered.

In the year 306. *Peter* the renowned Martyr and Bishop of *Alexandria*, together with the rest of the Bishops of the *East*, made several Canons, adjusting the Punishments of those, who had lapsed in the time of Persecution: Some of which more immediately relating to my present purpose, I shall think it very well worth my while to set down here at large, as I find them recorded in the Annals of *Baronius*. And this the rather, because, both in regard of the great Variety of Cases with which we are thereby acquainted, as well as in respect of their singular Wisdom, thorowly considering the differences of cases, and allotting accordingly different Penalties, by a most just Severity, tempered with due Moderation, they seem to be as remarkable as any thing of this kind that is to be found in all the Treasures of Antiquity.

d Annal. Baron. vol. 2 p. 792.

As for those (saith he) who counterfeited and dissembled (like *David*, who to save his Life, feigned himself frantick, when he was far from being so) and did not down-right subscribe to the denial of *Christ*; but being in great straits, and endured with weaker Understandings, were, like foolish Children, deceived into the Snares of the Enemy; as more particularly, those Persons who only pretended that they had offered unto Idols, or that they had approached their Altars, or given up their names, or else had sent Pagans to offer in their stead; because, with the greatest Caution, they avoided either with their own hands to carry the fire, or to perfume with Incense those impure Demons, as well as, because it is not certain, whether or no they might not do, even what they did, out of mere Ignorance; Let it be sufficient to impose upon such only, six Months Penance of Conversion.

Then in the 6th Canon, as to the Cause of those, who, (as he observes) had sent their Slaves, tho' Christians also, to offer for them, or any thing of the like nature that was required; He makes this difference

rence in the Punishment to be inflicted on these different Persons, viz. Let the Servants, who, as being in subjection, and in a sort under the Custody and Authority of their Masters, and perhaps terrified by their Threatnings, might be forced through the dread of them so to transgress; Let them continue in the Works of Penance for one year only; from henceforth learning as the Servants of Christ to do his Will, and to fear him above All, being assured that whatsoever good any one does, that shall he receive at his hands, whether he be Bond or Free. But then as for the Masters, who were free and at their own disposal, let them undergo severe Penances for no less than three years together; as well, because they grossly dissembled themselves, as because they (in a manner) compelled their Servants so to transgress.

The same Peter of Alexandria does there perfectly acquit those (as well he might) into whose mouths neats sacrificed to Idols, were forcibly thrust, as those also who were served, as in the former case of *Barabam*, tho' they might not bear the Tryal in all Circumstances with the same Courage.

But besides this usual one of Excommunication, and the rest beforementioned, the Antients also invented, and frequently imposed upon such Delinquents another very adequate and ingenious Punishment; which too, in my Opinion, was not less severe in its kind, than any of the former, tho' perhaps less taken notice of under that Notion. For 'twas a common thing with the Primitive Bishops, to oblige those who had lapsed, by either denying or dissembling the Faith, before they could be reconciled to the Church, to make frequent Visits to the Confessors that were detained in Prison, and there, in the most humble manner, to beg their Pardon, against whom they had so notoriously offended, in shamefully denying what the other had so courageously confessed; and to intreat them likewise to interceed for them. Which certainly (if well considered) must needs be no small sort of Mortification, for those who had cloathed themselves with Shame, and were all over polluted with the deformities of so ignominious a Denial, so much, as even to behold the dazzling Countenances of them, who shined out so bright in the full Lustre of a most glorious Confession. And how much more confounded then must we needs suppose them, at the just Reproofs which they would hear from them? What better way could there ever have been invented, more effectually to Consult either the Glory and Dignity of the Confessors, or the real Benefit and Advantage of the lapsed? Who were by this means, in a manner forced, as men overcome, to prostrate themselves at the feet of their Conquerours, and with the lowest Humility and Submission of Mind, first to qualify themselves for, and then to procure the Peace of the Church, by the prevailing Prayers of such powerful Intercessors. But yet that which was first introduced as a very good Remedy, was, by humane Perverseness and Iniquity, at length converted into no small Distemper; whilst the lapsed, quite despising both the Bishop and all his Presbyters, of their own accord, betook them-

themselves to the Martyrs, and having first extorted from them such petitionary Letters concerning Peace, looked then upon it, as a perfect Debt, absolutely owing to the Prayers of the Martyrs, and there-upon peremptorily required, rather than requested to be received to the Communion of the Church.

Concerning all the particulars of which Abuses, we may be fully informed from several passages in the Writings of St. Cyprian; who also diligently endeavoured to correct the same. Such now was the prudent Care and Diligence of Ecclesiastical Governours in the first Centuries of Christianity, by all the means imaginable to hinder Men from denying, or dissembling, or any ways being ashamed of the Faith.

And indeed something of the like Care and Discipline still continued upon occasion, for some Ages afterwards. For when Gundebald, King of *Burgundy*, had been convinced by *Aleimus* Bishop of *Vienna*, concerning the *Arian* Heresy, and to acknowledge the true Orthodox Faith; but yet, out of fond Shame, joyned with some politick ends, endeavouring to dissemble and conceal this his Conversion, desired the good Bishop not publickly to anoint him with the Chrism, (the usual way then of admitting Hereticks, when converted, into the Bosom of the Church) but that he would privately, and in secret, perform this Ceremony for him: He had this Answer; *If you do truly believe what our Lord hath taught us, then do accordingly. Now he saith thus; If any one Confess me before Men, &c. And again, He that denyeth me before Men, &c. In like manner forewarning his holy Apostles concerning the tryals of the ensuing Persecutions, He thus admonisheth them; Beware of Men, for they shall deliver you up to the Councils, and they will scourge you in their Synagogues, and ye shall be brought before Governours and Kings for my sake, and for a Testimony against them and the Gentiles. But you (saith he) being a King, and so in no danger of being brought before any one, do yet refuse in publick to confess the Creator of all things, for fear of the Sedition of your own Subjects. But God cannot be mocked; nor does he love him, who for the sake of an Earthly Kingdom, refuseth to confess his Name. But Gundebald still continuing in his Refusal to make a publick Confession of his Faith, and desiring to be thought to be of another Belief than he really was in his Heart, remained justly excluded the Communion of the Orthodox Church, even to his lives end.*

Greg. Turon de gestis Franc. lib. 2. caput 34.

And now, if after all this it should be still objected, in manifest Contradiction to the known Wisdom, as well as Moderation of these celebrated Guides and Rulers of the Church, that they required of Christians more than was necessary, and were too severe and rigorous in their Censures; I shall next appeal and cite them to a much higher Tribunal, and such as they must needs acknowledge to be wholly infallible in all their Censures. Which brings me to my fourth General consideration, viz.

C H A P. X.

The Miraculous Preservation of some, and Supports of others, who were sincere and constant in their Confession, and the no less miraculous and extraordinary Punishments divinely inflicted upon the contrary Offenders.

AND first then, tho' the Scripture had not otherwise (as it does) so expressly commended that of the three Children, who chose to be cast into a fiery Furnace, rather than, by bowing down their Bodies before it, seem to Worship the Golden Image which *Nebuchadnezzar* had set up; yet what better Argument could we have of Gods immediate Approbation of that Action, than his so miraculous Preservation of them?

The like Miracle we also find in the Epistle of the Church of *Smyrna*, concerning *Polycarp* the Bishop of that City, who being upon the like account condemned to be burnt to Death, as soon as the Pile of Wood was well kindled, the Flames rose up round about him at a distance, in the manner of a great Arch, or like the Sails of a Ship, when filled with the Wind: Whilst he remained in the midst untouched, and without harm. Which being taken notice of with Admiration, and seeing that it was impossible to put an end to his Life by Fire, one of the Executioners was commanded to run him thorow with a Sword.

Pontianus, who, for refusing to Sacrifice, suffered at *Spoletto* under the Emperor *Antoninus*, after he had been almost all other ways miserably Tormented, was then thrown to the Lions in the Theatre, who would not so much as once touch him. After that he was thrust into Prison, there to be Starv'd to death: But being unexpectedly fed by the ministry of an Angel, for several days, the Judge commanded boiling Lead to be poured all over his naked Body; and still when this also could not kill him, they at last put an end to his Life, by cutting off his Head.

Eusebius in like manner tells us of a great many Christians suffering under *Dioclesian*, in the City Tyre of *Phenicia*, who having been exposed to Lions, Bears, Leopards, and other ravenous Beasts, never received the least harm from them; tho' when tryed with any other Persons, the beasts fell greedily to their Work. Which tho' it justly caused Amazement in all Beholders, yet their cruel Persecutors, not suffering them to escape so, put them all to the Sword, and then cast their Bodies into the Sea.

The like to this we also read, happening to *Elutherius*, *Cacilia*, *Eustratius*, and many others in the several Martyrologies. who, tho' they were

were all suffered to die, at last by one sort of death or another, that so the Rewards of their Constancy might no longer be deferred, were yet first wonderfully preserved from so many kinds, that it might thereby sufficiently appear, both how able the same Divine Power was to have still preserved them from any violent death at all; and how miraculously Heaven owned their Cause, and so, how altogether inexcusable was the Obstinacy of those, who would not be convinced thereby.

But still most Remarkable is that of one *Theodore*, who underwent all sorts of Torments for half a day together, with such strange Cheerfulness and Alacrity, that *Sallust* the Prefect, to whom *Julian* the Apostate had given that unacceptable Employment, being perfectly amazed thereat, and utterly despairing of Success, remanded the Man to Prison; and, going to the Emperour, honestly advised him to leave off such Cruelties; since otherwise he would only procure still greater Honour to the Christians, and to himself nothing at all but Disgrace and Shame thereby. Afterwards this *Theodore* was set free, and went to *Antioch*: When being asked; *If he felt any Pain when in the burning hot Brazen Instrument?* He answered, That at the first he did feel some: But soon after one in the Form of a young Man standing by him, continually wiped off his Sweat, and bathed him with cold Water; with which he was so admirably comforted and delighted, that after he was released and set down, he could not chuse but be troubled thereat.

We want not also very grave Authors, and of unquestionable Credit (one of them too, far enough from being any Friend to the Cause) who tell us of a great many Persons under the Arian Persecution, who had still the Miraculous continuation of the Gift of Speaking, even after they had had their Tongues pluck'd out.

Now, tho' thus to be preserved from so many Deaths and Inconveniences, or not to be sensible of any Pain at all under the hands of such exquisite Tormenters, is a Thing astonishing to consider of; yet for Men so to behave themselves, as all the rest of the Martyrs did, even under the greatest Sense of Pain, is to be look'd upon as neither much less Admirable, nor less to our present Purpose. But yet concerning that supernatural Courage, with which they bore their Torments, I shall not need to bestow much time; having already (tho' to a different Purpose) produced so many Instances of Extraordinary Constancy, which may equally serve also, as so many Arguments of an Extraordinary Divine Support, and consequently of God's immediate Approbation too, of the particular Causes for which, and manner after which they suffered. The Consequence of both which, was indeed so apparent to those who impartially weighed the Matter, that several of the Judges themselves, and many of their very Tormenters, were so powerfully convinc'd thereby, as to become immediately Confessors and Martyrs their own selves.

But

But waving all these Examples, both as already sufficiently well known to most, and as too numerous to be here particularly related, I shall at present content my self with one Example onely, of a little different kind, which may well serve for all the rest; since it is such as, I think, nothing in all History can go beyond it. It happen'd in the Persecution in *Egypt*; carried on by the Emperour *Maximianus*, and was there also presented to the World in the Person of a young and tender Virgin, the Beautiful and Virtuous *Poracenia*; who, escaping the double Trap laid for her, by the Complotment of her lustful Master and the wicked Judge, Nobly scorn'd to save her Life, as She was offered, by denying Christ either with her Mouth, or by the future unsuitable ill Life she was tempted to. Whereupon she was presently condemn'd to be put stark naked into a great Brass Vessel full of boiling hot Pitch, there ready prepared for that purpose. But the heavenly Creature, hearing this Sentence, Thus apply'd herself to the Judge; *Since you are resolved (said she) That I shall die this sort of Death, Let me entreat, nay, let me Conjure you by the very Head of your Emperour, which to you (I perceive) is of all Things most dear and sacred, That you would not make an End of me presently, nor all at once, but let me in leisurely and by degrees, one Part after another; That so you may plainly perceive and know, what Torments, and how patiently too, that God whom I worship, and you know not, both can, and will enable me to undergo for His sake.* Which Request of hers, being both easily granted, and punctually performed, she bare that unspeakable Torture for a whole Hour together, with unparalleld Courage, till at length the Pitch-bubbling up to her very Neck, she expir'd.

Psallid. in
Laufrac.
c. 1.

Now I make no question, but that she first felt what she said, otherwise it had been impossible, that ever she could have said so under those Circumstances; and much more, that she could ever have so made good her Challenge. The bare Consideration, methinks, of such a Confession, and such a Martyrdom, should be enough to convert, even the greatest Atheist, and to extort from him also a Confession, That herein must needs be the Finger, or rather indeed the Arm of God.

But I proceed to the miraculous Punishments divinely inflicted upon several of the contrary behaviour: Where, passing by such of them, as sometimes immediately followed upon those other just Censures of the Church in General, I shall, still more closely, confining my self to the Subject in hand, take notice only what followed of this kind upon this particular Sin of Dissimulation or Denial. Now, if the first remarkable Judgment inflicted in the very Infancy of the Gospel, was that upon *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, so wonderfully spoken to Death by St. Peter, for their Dissimulation, in endeavouring to be thought to have done, what really they had not, and that in a Matter of good too; where to seem to be, is no fault at all, provided we really be so also; What shall we then think of those, how faulty and obnoxious must we needs suppose them, who endeavour the same in an

an evil Matter, where to desire to *seem*, as well as to *be*, has in it self also a distinct Faultiness? For tho' Piety may, yet Wickedness cannot be wholly counterfeited. Here, only to *desire to seem*, is also to *be* in some proportion. Whosoever can once find in his heart to court it, must also at the same time, well deserve the Reputation of it: For to endeavour to be thought bad, is actually to become so in a great measure; since 'tis always evil, not to avoid (as much as possible) the very Appearance of Evil.

But we want not Variety of more direct Examples in the Writings of the Primitive Fathers. *Tertullian* acquaints us with a Woman, who, *Tertul. lib. de spec.* so far only complying with the Pagan Idolatries, as to go to their publick Theatre, returned thence possess'd with an unclean Spirit; who being in Exorcism, expostulated with, how he durst set upon one of the Faithful? Boldly reply'd, that he did no more therein, than what of Right belong'd to him; since he found her within his own Territories.

St. Cyprian likewise, speaking of the Wonderful Prodigies happening to those, who in the time of Persecution, had prevaricated from their Profession, relates several very memorable Stories; which I shall give you (as near as I can) in his own Words. *If* (saith he) *Cyprian lib. de Lap. fs.* some unbelieving People give less Credit to what is still to come, let them be terrified, at least, with what has actually for the present happened. Behold, how many remarkable Punishments of those who have deny'd, have we our selves seen with our eyes? How many of their unhappy Ends do we still lament? Even here they cannot go wholly without Punishment, tho' the Day of Punishment be not yet come. But in the mean time some are chastised, that others may be thereby amended; For the Examples belong to all, whilst the Torments to a few only. One of those, who of their own accord went up to the Capitol to deny the Faith, after he had done so, was presently struck dumb. The Punishment began from that part, from whence the Crime began; so that he was wholly unable to ask Pardon, who now wanted the use of Speech, whereby to sue for Mercy. Another of the Female Sex, being then in the Bath (for this was still wanting to her former Crimes, that she should presently betake her self to the Bath, who had so lately forfeited the Grace of that Vital Layer of Baptism) There the unclean Creature, forthwith possess'd with an unclean Spirit, fell down to the ground; with her Teeth tore her own Tongue, with which she had so wickedly either fed, or spoken; After the Idolatrous Food had once been taken in, the Fury of her Mouth was armed to its own Destruction: She became her own Executioner; nor could she survive long afterwards; but, grievously tormented with intolerable Pains in her Bowels, breath'd out her last.

After these, the holy Man immediately adds hereto three or four other Prodiges of the like Nature: some of his own Knowledge, and such of which he affirms himself to have been an eye-witness; and then concludes after this manner: *Quam multi quotidie, &c. How ma-*

my daily, neglecting to do Penance for their Denial, or to confess the Guilt of their Crime, are fill'd with such unclean Spirits? How many disturb'd in Mind, even to downright Distraction, are perfectly overwhelm'd with the Rage of their own Madness? Nor need we descend to the several Catastrophes of every one in particular; since by the manifold Ruines of the World, the Punishments of the several Offences are no less various, than the Multitude of the Offenders themselves is numerous.

To this of St. Cyprian, we may also add, that of Theodores, who informs us, That Julian, the Uncle of Julian the Emperour, having, (to gain favour with that Apostate) deny'd the Christian Faith, soon after fell into a strange Disease, which so eat up his very Bowels with putrefaction, that he could no more void his Excrements, according to the usual course of Nature, but only through that polluted Mouth, with which he had deny'd his Saviour: Even himself being sufficiently convinced before he died, that this was the immediate Hand of God upon him, for his Apostacy and Persecutions.

Niceph. 1. 10. c. 29. Nicephorus likewise tells us of one Heron a Bishop, who, having been guilty of the same Crime, suffer'd the same divine Punishment, which made him so odious and intolerable a Spectacle, that he was cast out of doors into the High-way, where he ended his Days, of all Men unpitied.

The same Author also speaks of one Theotecnus, who, after his Apostacy, had all his Flesh turn'd into Corruption and Worms, by the continual Bitings of which, he first lost his Eyes, and then through Extremity of Pain and Anguish, growing perfectly distracted, bit off and devour'd his own Tongue, and so ended his present, to go still to far greater Torments.

In short; How extremely shameful is the Sin, and how Infinitely great the danger of such Denials or even Dissimulations in the Case of our Religion, may no less sufficiently appear from those miraculous means which God sometimes makes use of, in order to recall and reestablish such Offenders. One very remarkable Instance of which kind we have in Apollonius, a certain Reader in the Church at Thebais; who, terrify'd by the prospect of ensuing Torments, and yet desiring to avoid a formal down-right Denial contrived to bribe one Philemon a Pagan friend, by the gift of four Pieces of Gold; that, changing his Habit, he might counterfeit the Person of Apollonius, and so, among others, Offer Sacrifice before the Magistrate. But this Heathen, being of a sudden divinely enlightened in his Mind, and warmed by the Example of the Martyrs, instead of acting the Person of another Man, represented his own in good Earnest; and having openly professed his belief in Christ, and being exquisitely Tormented for so doing, still again and again constantly persisted in affirming the same thing, till he was at last honoured with the Glorious Crown of Martyrdom. By

whose

g Ex Me
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St. Sur. To.
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Da Thyrsi
& sociorum
citante Ed-
ron. vol. 3.
p. 54.

whose unexpected Example also *Apollonius*, being much Encouraged and even ashamed out of his former Cowardice, afterwards with a Constant Mind underwent the same Combate.

Nay, Providence has been sometimes pleased to declare the future Rewards of Martyrs, and the Punishment of Desertors even by a Vision from Heaven so manifest to their very Tormentors, that they have become Confessors thereupon, to which purpose in one of *St. Basil's* Orations, we have this following Relation. In the lesser *Armenia*, under the Persecution of *Licinius*, forty Christian Soldiers were condemned to die, for their resolute Confession of Christ, by being exposed quite Naked to the Extremities of rigid Cold and Frost; yet so as that any of them might, upon their Denial of their Faith, retire into a Warm convenient Place, near hand prepared to receive them, upon that Condition only. After they had for some time bravely undergone the extreme Severity, one of the *Pagan* Officers, who was conveniently placed hard by, to see this Sentence duly Executed upon them, observed a Company of Angels descending, and placing several Crowns upon the Head of each of the whole Number, one of them onely accepted; who, presently afterwards being weary of the Tryal and denying Christ, was suffered to Retreat into the Warm Receiptacle, but presently dyed thereupon. The Officer himself Powerfully convinced by this Miraculous Vision, openly confessed himself a Christian, and boldly stepping into the Place of the Apostate, supply'd the deficiency of the first Number, and with the rest received his Crown of Martyrdom.

f Basil. Oration. in 40. Martyres.

Now, tho' all these Prodigies and many more, which might be still produced of the like Nature, have been, and are still sufficient, when well considered, to convince even a heathen Observer; yet we, who believe already and have received the Holy Scripture for our Rule of Faith, need not wholly depend upon such Arguments, as having this other still more sure Word of Prophecy for our Confirmation in this Point, Which shall be my Fifth Consideration, *viz.*

C H A P. XL

How Express and Positive the Scripture is for the absolute Necessity of such a Constant Confession upon all Occasions, and how directly it Forbids and Condemns the contrary Denials and Dissimulations.

WHAT can be more plain in this Case, than the Words of our Great Lord and Master to his Disciples after His Resurrection? *Act. 1. 8. Ye shall be Witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost Parts of the Earth.*

But had his Disciples, whilst under their Tryals and manifold Persecutions, deny'd Christ with their Mouths, tho' they had secretly acknowledged him in their Hearts, they would have been found therein no better than false and lying Witnesses, and indeed none of Christ's, but the Devil's Martyrs or Witnesses, who is a Liar from the Beginning. And however peculiar this Command might be to the Apostles and first Disciples of our Saviour, who alone had the Opportunity of being immediate Eye-Witnesses of His Resurrection; yet elsewhere the Injunction is General and without Exception indispensably obliging all Christians in all Ages, as a Duty so absolutely necessary, that upon the performance or neglect thereof, will depend our Eternal Happiness or Misery, our being owned as his Genuine Disciples, or our being finally rejected as Cast-aways at the last Great day.

For those are the Express Words which flowed also from the same Blessed Lips of Truth. *Matth. 18. 32. Whosoever shall confess me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven; But whosoever shall deny me before Men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.*

Upon which place, thus saith the Comment of that Antient and Learned Author, commonly going under the Name of *St. Chrysostom*, *The Faith of the Heart will no more avail, without the Confession of the Mouth, than the Confession of the Mouth will, without the Faith of the Heart. And if it must be enough for Christ that we know him, tho' we Confess him not before Men; therefore, it must be enough for us also, that he knows us, tho' at the last he Confess us not before Men. 'Tis not sufficient for any, to say, I retain the Truth in my Heart, and in the mean time disown it before the World. And therefore he does not say; He that confesseth me in his heart, but, He that confesseth me before Men. And again, Mark 8. 38. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, in this Adulterous and Sinful Generation, of him also*

also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels. Consonant to this also is what St. Paul assures us, Rom. 10. 10. *With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.* And 2 Tim. 2. 12. *If we deny him, he will deny us.* The same Apostle likewise earnestly Exhorts Timothy, *Not to be ashamed of the Testimony of our Lord, but to be partaker of the Afflictions of the Gospel.* 2 Tim. 1. 8. In like manner he plainly intimates and necessarily supposeth, *That he that denyeth the Faith is much worse than an Infidel.* 1 Tim. 5. 8. So we are assured that it is the Express will of God, *That every Tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.* Phil. 2. 11.

That Apostle likewise, who by sad Experience was but too well acquainted with the Hainousness of the Crime, and had wept bitterly for his own Denial, does being afterwards converted, (according to his Lords Injunction) effectually endeavour to strengthen his Brethren, whilst he commands us in the name of God, *To be ready always* (that is, even in the midst of Terrours, and under the greatest dangers of Persecution, as plainly appears by the verse foregoing) *to give an Answer to every Man, that asketh us a reason of the Hope that is in us.* 1 Pet. 3. 15. Which place of Scripture can no otherwise be understood, than as necessarily requiring our Readiness at all times, not to palliate or conceal, but openly to confess our Faith: For all our Hope being grounded upon our Faith, it is impossible for us to give any Reason of the first, without giving also a reason of the Second; And as impossible to give any Reason or Account at all of either, without making a plain confession and acknowledgment thereof. To Conclude; In the Revelations of St. John, amongst other hainous Criminals, *Idolaters, and all that love or make a lie*, are perfectly excluded the holy City, and have their Portion allotted them in the lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death: Whereas he that overcometh, (that is, by a constant confession) is there promised the Inheritance of all things. Rev. 21. 7, 8. and Rev. 22. 15. And in the Epistle to the Church of Pergamos, our Lord himself highly approves of Antipas by name, for his dying for the Faith, and commends that Church also for her constancy therein, in these Words; *Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my Faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* Rev. 2. 13.

I have here all along (you see) confined my self only to Express commands and prohibitions in the Case, together with the Rewards and Penalties, the Divine Approbation or Dislike, no less expressly signify'd and annexed, upon the performance or Neglect of what is so required. All which are so many direct Proofs of the absolute Necessity of this Duty of confession. But should I also undertake particularly

ticularly to insist upon all those other numerous places in holy writ, which either suppose or imply the same obligation, by a most natural and unavoidable Consequence; I should then oblige my self to transcribe (well nigh) the greater part of the whole New Testament. For indeed the very Nature and Genius, the whole Tenour and Current of the Gospel runs this way. All those multiply'd Precepts and Doctrines about Patience and Self-denial, about Suffering and Taking up the Cross, about our Readiness to lay down our Lives, and not to fear those who can kill the Body; about Christian Simplicity and Love without Dissimulation, Giving no Offence, and abstaining from all Appearance of Evil; All these Precepts, Cautions, and Exhortations, and innumerable more of the like kind, are either chiefly for the sake of, or most closely imply the Absolute Necessity of this prime Duty which we are discouraging of; since otherwise they must needs be either wholly in vain, or to very little purpose so much inculcated. So that did it not so apparently gratify the sinful Inclinations of corrupt Flesh and Blood, in delivering Men all at once, from ever tasting the unpleasing Severities of the Cross, one would think it impossible, that it should ever enter into the Heart of any to affirm, That, concealing their Faith within their own Breast, they might innocently deny the same with their Mouth, or any other way dissemble it by their Actions. Since 'tis most evident, there's no other Crime whatsoever, the Lawfulness of which they could contrive to maintain, with greater defiance of the most broad-faced Light of Scripture to the contrary. When in the mean time they have nothing to colour over or disguise the deadly Poyson, but one or two passages only in all the Bible, and those too most miserably wrested and abused by them. Which again carries me on still to the distinct Task of a sixth Enquiry or Consideration, viz.

C H A P. XII.

How false and foolish are the pretended Grounds and Reasons, upon which such Dissemblers endeavour to Justify and establish their contrary Opinion and Practice; together with the many absurd consequences and most monstrous Inconveniences of diverse kinds necessarily following thereupon.

NOW after that of their most beloved Naa-man, their only place seems to be that of Prov. 23. 26, or some other such like it, wherein we have it signify'd, That God sees, and chiefly regards Men's Hearts. From whence they boldly infer, That if the

they do but take Care to keep their Hearts for God, by safely wrapping up a right belief therein, they may then venture with their Mouths, or by any other action of their outward Man, securely to deny the same : Or else provided they can but secretly keep up in their Hearts a rectify'd Intention, they may then very safely both be present at, and with their lips join, or at least seem to join with others, in such Prayers, the matter of which is otherwise acknowledged to be directly against their Duty, and the Divine command.

Now they who thus teach the Lawfulness of Dissimulation, seem even in their very so doing, actually to Dissemble with us, whilst they teach that, which they themselves do no way really believe; and yet would be thought to do so, merely out of a design the better to secure their Reputation, to cover the shame of their own base Actions so agreeable thereto; and as the only expedient to excuse, and take off the odium of their foul Hypocrisy among their friends, when they happen to be reproved for it by them. So that we have great reason to suspect, that such Men do not say as they think, when they say, they think it lawful, to deny what they think. However, this Assertion seems, in the natural consequence thereof, to contradict, fall foul upon, and even overturn its own self ; at least, to take away the very foundation of its finding Credit with any other Person, whom they can never reasonably induce to think, That they say true in what they affirm, when they affirm, That they believe it lawful for them so to deny their belief. Since how can we ever be secure (according to their own Principles) that they may not as well lie, and in this very Case, falsely say, that they do believe, what they really do not, as in the other Case falsely deny their belief of what they really do believe? But passing from the Persons, to the thing it self, and leaving them to believe, or not believe, as they will; the pretended ground and main reason for what they so maintain, I'm sure, is altogether false and frivolous.

For, in the first place, it is by no means true, That God has Mens Hearts in such Cases, or that they do, or can therewith at the same time truly serve him. Which I'm confident, will very easily appear to any one, who (not resting in the mere empty sound of Words, without any sense at all) shall only well consider, what that phrase does truly signify and import.

Now God is then (and can only then be) truly said to have our Hearts when he has the Affections thereof, in such a due Fear, Reverence, and Love of him above all things, as may effectually dispose us, to endeavour to please him in all the ways of his own direction to that purpose; that is, in one Word, by keeping of His Commandments, whatsoever present loss or hardship it may cost us for so doing. So that when we can knowingly venture to displease him

him by acting contrary thereto, it must be alwaies for the sake of something else, which we at the same time really more fear, love, and prefer before our Maker; and which therefore (whatsoever we may pretend to the contrary) has our Hearts in good earnest, and not the Living Lord who searcheth them. Such Hypocrites indeed do allow God (what they cannot help) something of their *Heads*; since their Understandings seem rightly enough informed, concerning what they ought to do: But their *Hearts* he is far enough from having, whilst they can find in their Hearts, to act so quite contrary to that Knowledge. Unless we can suppose, That they who sin most against their own Knowledge or Conscience, may be said therein, the most to give God their Heart. Besides, the very reason why God so chiefly requires the heart, is, because whensoever he has that truly, he must of necessity have therewith also the whole Man; whilst every Thought, Word, and Action is naturally reduced thereby into a suitable Obedience. So that 'tis wholly impossible to separate or put asunder, what God and Nature have so closely conjoined. Wheresoever there is really the *Heart* of a Sincere Disciple, there will also be the *Lips* of a confessor, upon occasion; the Observation of our Blessed Saviour being no less true in the good, than in the bad Sense, That *out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh.*

But still in the Second place, were it possible in such Cases, That God could truly have the Heart, yet that alone by no means would be sufficient: For tho' we may, indeed, find that this (upon the grounds already specify'd) is the main thing regarded by him; yet where do we read, that this is the only thing requisite? Who is it that hath exempted the outward Man from the Jurisdiction of him who equally Created both Parts for his own Glory? We find, 'tis true, some persons, and what kind of ones withal they were, whom the *Psalmist* brings in paunting it to this purpose; yet who can justly say, or without the highest Presumption, That *his Tongue is his own*, to do with it what he pleaseth?

Did we indeed consist of nothing else but naked Spirit, it might then be perhaps, sufficient to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts only: But since we are cloathed with Flesh, and he hath given us a body, as it hath pleased him, he justly expects, as well as expressly requires; That we should glorify him, in our body, no less than in our spirit, which are both the Lord's.

2 Cor. 6.
20.

And still, as this pernicious Heresie is (you see) thus utterly false and groundless, in what it pretends to for its support; so the absurd consequences and inconveniences thereof are prodigiously both great and numerous.

For first, were what is so pretended, indeed sufficient for the purpose, as I have already proved it far enough from being so: yet where the Love of the Truth is so very feeble, and that of the World

so strong, that the Man can prevail with himself totally to deny his Faith in his Words and outward Actions, the faint remainders thereof still secretly retained in his Heart, or head rather, must needs have so slender a hold in either, that they are very unlikely to be long-lived with him in so unsuitable an Habitation.

Nay, they who can afford to make it once their Custom, with the outward Man, to join, or but so much as to seem to join, with others in publick, in such Service or Prayers, any part whereof they verily believe to be, as to the matter thereof, unlawful, and which in their Hearts they inwardly detest, there is very great danger of such persons coming by degrees, to be also inwardly reconciled thereto, and at last fully and totally to join with them in good earnest.

What befell *Genesius*, who, by order of the Emperour *Dioclesian*, acting on the Theatre the part of a Christian, with an intent to ridicule and expose that holy Profession, was so suddenly changed, that, instead of so doing, he seriously professed, and dyed for that Religion; as also what happen'd of the same nature to one *Porphiry* another famous Actor alike employed by *Julian* to the same purpose: These indeed are to be look'd upon as Events very extraordinary and miraculous. But that of the Wretch, spoken of by *Lucian*, who acting the part of mad *Ajax*, was so forcibly carry'd away with the Affection, that himself became ever afterwards really distracted; is a thing, far less strange, and perhaps even in a natural way, fairly enough accountable. And however in a Moral sense, there is no mere counterfeiting of an ill Man, without being so also in down-right earnest. He that can once take upon him, or make it his business only to act the part of an Infidel, will easily learn to be an Original, and, acting the part to the very Life, will at last naturally become such in reality, to all intents and purposes. 'Tis possible for a man to tell a lie so often, till at length, forgetting it to be so, he comes, no less than others, to give a real Credit thereto; besides they are easily perswaded to a total desertion thereof, who never yet tasted any thing of the pleasures of Religion; which yet can never be truly relished without Sincerity. So that what wonder is it, that they should in the conclusion be given over to believe a lie, who at first received not the Truth in the love thereof? For 'tis difficult long to hold the Truth in Unrighteousness: But having once put away a good Conscience, by such shameful Tricks and Artifices, Men come naturally at length to make Shipwrack of their right Faith; which, whilst indeed they had it, could serve for no other purpose, but only to make them extremely restless and uneasy, by continually upbraiding them with their quite contrary Hypocritical Practices.

But still, in the second place, could such Men be sure, that they should never proceed any farther, yet to endeavour to seem what they are not, and not to seem, what they are, being no other in it self than formal down-right Hypocrisie; To conclude therefore, that they may go thus far safely, must necessarily imply their Belief of the no Necessity of that Sincerity, which the Gospel every where so strictly urges and require^s

quires above all things; and that Hypocrisie it self is far from being really a thing so displeasing to God, as 'tis there pretended, and represented. Nay, whereas God has so expressly declar'd, That our very best Performances are with him nothing at all worth, unless they proceed from and be accompanied with Sincerity; What height then of Presumption and Blasphemy must it needs be, to expect, That the grossest Dissimulation alone should so effectually recommend Men to the Favour of the God of Truth, as that he should pardon and excuse them, for the very worst Crime they could possibly contrive to commit, merely for the sake of, and because it is Accompanied with, the most shameful Lying and Hypocrisie?

Besides; This curs'd Practice and Opinion seems to be founded in secret Atheism, and tacitly implies this other distinct Blasphemy; That God is either not endued with sufficient Power, or else not Good or Wise enough, to defend and support Men in the due Observation of His own Laws, unless they sometimes help him out, by their vile Lyes and Hypocrisie, and having a Recourse to the shelter of Dissimulation.

Again; Whereas the Profession of the true Religion is that, which, of all other things, we ought the most to Glory in and openly Triumph; since thereby we become truly Honourable our selves, in so glorifying our Creatour: We cannot therefore contrive more effectually to dishonour both our selves and Him, nor cast a worse Reflection upon all His Attributes, than in basely disowning of our Faith; whilst in so doing we necessarily affix this most disgraceful Imputation upon the holy Author thereof, as if he had revealed that to us, which we have good Reason, to conceal and be ashamed of. And accordingly, such Denials are by Christ Himself expressly call'd and accounted no better, than *a being ashamed of Him, and of His words*. And what Thanks, think you, can be due to those Men, who have thus parted with the Total of their Religion, but only what they cannot yet help the keeping of? What they are ashamed to own, and fain would, but cannot for the present yet get rid of? To proceed; it infers (quite contrary to our Saviour's Caution) great Boldness and Presumption towards Heaven, and Hearts quite void of all due Fear of Him, who has declared Himself a Consuming Fire to all such Offenders, and Able to cast both their Souls and Bodies into Hell; and yet at the same time a most cowardly and slavish Fear towards their Fellow-Mortals, whose Breath is in their Nostrils, and whose Power at most, reacheth no farther than over the Carkass, and what belongs thereto; and even that too perfectly limited and restrained, according to the Wisdom and good Pleasure of Him, whom they so fondly despise in the Comparison.

And consequently, in the next place, It argues them also no less void both of all true Love towards God, and Charity towards their Neighbour; Since, in both respects, what St. John has assur'd us, is most certain, That *perfect love casteth out all such fear; whilst he that so feareth, is far from being yet made perfect in love*. For as our Fear is, so is also our Love. And whoever yet prevail'd with himself to deny his Faith, unless tempted thereto by something of the World, the Loss

of which he first more fear'd, than the Loss of God's Favour; and which therefore he more lov'd, than God Himself, and sacrilegiously prefer'd before Him? But he who so loves the World or any thing therein, The Love of the Father is not truly in him. And then how can they love their Neighbours, who love not God, for whose sake alone it is they do so, whosoever truly love them? Or what Charity can there be in those, who, instead of being ready (as they are requir'd) to lay down their very Lives for the Spiritual Welfare of their Brethren, can be contented in so high a manner, to grieve and offend, and (as much as in them lies) by their Scandalous Examples of Denial, even to destroy those for whom Christ died?

Farthermore; This monstrous Tenet is directly contrary to the very Nature, and dissolves at once the whole Frame of Christianity, by utterly making void the Doctrine of the Cross, and all necessity of our ever suffering as Christians; and consequently takes away in a great measure, all occasion, and supersedes the use and exercise of all those highly commendable Vertues, of Zeal and Christian Courage, of Faith and Patience, of Meekness and Forgiving Enemies, together with many other Precepts and Injunctions of the like nature, which now make up so very considerable a part of the Gospel. For what Occasion or Opportunity can there be, in this respect, for the Exercise of any of those Graces, when there is not the least Danger or Necessity of suffering? And how can there be any Necessity of this, if we may lawfully say or do any thing, in order to prevent it? For no Man being endued with the Ability of looking into another mans heart, if we may therefore secretly retain our Faith there only, and yet deny the same with our Mouths, and Actions, and can constantly continue to do so, we must needs be perfectly safe from all Danger of Persecution upon that Account: Since the greatest Tyrant in the World, can possibly require no more of us, but must and will rest satisfy'd hereupon.

Again therefore; It necessarily condemns the Practice, and shamefully reviles the precious Memory of all the Glorious Confessors and Holy Martyrs; who, might this Doctrine once obtain for truth, must be no longer accounted Martyrs, but even the worst of Murderers, who could afford so rashly to cast away their Lives needlessly and to no purpose, and offer up to God the mere Sacrifice of Fools. Nay, even all those also, who have constantly payed such deserved Respect and Defe-
 rence to the Memories of these *Heroes*, that is, the whole Church of God in general, must justly be condemned therein, as guilty of Worse than superstitious Vanity, and be thought to have out-done even that ridiculous Folly of the very *Turks*, who are said to believe a sort of Sacredness in, and to shew no small Veneration towards the Persons of Fools and Madmen.

Another monstrous Consequence thereof still is, That it utterly destroys the main use of Language; defeats the very end, for which our Tongues and Lips, and other Organs of Speech were chiefly bestowed upon us. Which was to enable us more certainly to convey the true inward Sentiments of our minds to one another; to discover our several Abilities or defects; how well, or ill we are inwardly stored

and provided with the Treasures of Belief and Knowledge, and other Graces; and so accordingly edifie and supply, confirm and strengthen each other, by receiving, or Communicating mutual helps and assistances. But now, if Men are not obliged to speak truly, what they believe and know; but may be permitted the Liberty of doing the quite contrary, then this admirable Priviledge and Prerogative of Speech, with which Man is endued above any of the Inferior Creatures, must not any longer be really so accounted of, but be looked upon as given men far worse than in vain, even to their no small Damage and disadvantage; so that they had far better have been without it. Since, when thus perverted, they must either not rely upon it at all, and so be sure never to receive any Benefit thereby; or else be fatally misguided, and eternally deceived and abused, if they do depend upon it, as we are naturally inclined.

To which Inconveniency I may therefore add in the next place, That this damnable Heresie (if yet it deserves not to be called by a worse and more comprehensive name) does tend wholly to subvert all foundation and Possibility of a Church visible, and consequently of our Communion therewith, and the Benefits therefrom. For what manner of possibility could there be, of ever discovering, either where the Church is, or that there is indeed any such thing at all as the Church, were all the Members of it not obliged to any particular Mark or Character, whereby to distinguish them from the rest of the World: But instead of any sufficient Sign or Indication of their Faith and Profession, should make it their Business to hide and conceal themselves, by joining in their Words, and external Actions either with *Hereticks* or with *Pagans* and *Infidels*? Among all the several Religions that are, or ever yet have been in the World, I know not of any one, but what requires its several Votaries and Proselytes, not to deny, but plainly to own their general Belief and Practice. And for all People openly to walk (as the Prophet *Micah* has it) every one in the Name of their God, is a thing both usual and natural. None ever yet asserted the contrary Liberty of Denial, but some few onely (as I have already shewn) of the very worst of *Hereticks*, or indeed *Atheists* rather, who seem therein professed Enemies to Piety it self, and to have designed thereby, if possible, to root up all Religion in general out of the World; to which purpose nothing could be more naturally adapted. But the Christian Institution above any other whatsoever, has this peculiar to it self, that it more strictly requires this publick confession of all who embrace it, so as to be always in a Readiness to Die, much rather than deny the Faith. And how many Millions have actually done so upon that score? Whose Blood has constantly proved the seed of the Church, to propagate and preserve it: Cou'd the *Pagan* Persecutors but once have periwaded Christians to have acted otherwise in general, they would then have effected their own business which they aimed at; that is, The Church had been destroyed, and Christianity long since utterly Extinguished. For if every Man may keep his own Faith secretly to himself in his own Heart only, without being obliged any way to declare

the same either by Words or Actions, what possibility is there, That either Posterity or any others who are yet without it, should ever be acquainted with, or come to the Knowledge of the Truth? Any one Age of Persecution must, in this Case, necessarily put an end to the Faith, and make it be sure to die and perish from off the Earth, together with the Race of such secret and conceal'd Believers. And however in the mean time, this quite defeats all the ends of Religious Society, and cuts Men off from all the Benefits of Church-Communion. For if the publick Profession of our Faith be not necessary, neither is it necessary to be in Communion with any Church at all; with which we cannot be in Communion without such Profession; nor consequently is it necessary that we should, as Members thereof partake of the publick Prayers, Holy Word, or Sacraments; since all these are as so many Professions of the Faith; which, according to this impious Doctrine, we may very safely be without. Then also the Governours of the Church, whom Christ has entrusted with the Power of the Keys, have that Trust given them in vain: Since, according to this, 'tis impossible they should rightly use them, unless they were able certainly to discover Mens Hearts; since otherwise they must needs, Censure unjustly in excluding any from the Church even for the Denial of Christ, or for Blasphemy it self, before they were sure, that the Heart went also along with the Mouth.

They who are constantly present at any publick Worship, are justly presumed thereupon, heartily to join therein, and when they really do not, are thought to put a Notorious Mockery upon God and the whole Society: But yet if we may lawfully play the Hypocrites with the outward Man, then Words and Actions must pass for nothing; Nor will it be possible ever to satisfy others, of what Communion we are, or to be our selves satisfied of this concerning others. But whilst we think, that we are amongst very Devout Orthodox Professors, and expect to have our Prayers helped on, and rendered more acceptable and effectual by the united Fervour of many Brethren, we may be all the while very widely mistaken, and most of the Congregation may be either *Socinians*, *Turks*, or *Infidels*, who tho' they seem to use all the same Words with us, do yet in their Hearts pray the quite contrary.

Again; if this were indeed allowable, a Man might then indifferently go to all, and yet altogether in vain to any place of publick Devotion; Since by so doing he could neither receive, nor Communicate, any farther Benefit, than what might equally acree to him, in the private performances of his Closet only. So that this principle utterly confounds and subverts all necessary Communion, putting every Man into a Condition of absolute Independency indeed, wholly separate in matters of Religion from the rest of Mankind; in a Word, into such a State, as a Man would be in, were there no other Person in the whole World besides him. Nor can such Men ever have any motive to behave themselves otherwise, excepting only upon a Politick account; which may perhaps, now and then induce them to make a step to some Religious Assembly, or a smoaking Temple, to avoid some Temporal Inconvenience only, or to Complement and gain Favour with some haughty Po-

Potentate. For by the dreadful Liberty of this impious *Dogma*, Men may (according to the common Proverb, and perhaps beyond the design of it) not only, when they are at *Rome*, do as they do at *Rome*, but likewise upon occasion, chant it in a *Jewish* Synagogue, or Sacrifice in a *Pagan* Temple; nay, prostrating themselves, and (according to the usual manner) zealously knocking their Foreheads against the Pavements of a *Turkish* Mosque, may safely seem to join with those Miscreants in the verbal Repetition of their Prayers, wherein sometimes they Blaspheme our Saviour; and yet all this while suffer no Impairment of their Christianity, provided only they take Care, to keep themselves all along good thorow-paced Hypocrites, not minding what themselves say, nor letting their Hearts go along therewith. Now tho' this, I confess, is such a scandalous and astonishing sort of Liberty, as may well make the Heart of any Sincere Christian tremble at the very thoughts thereof; some there are notwithstanding, who, seeming to be affrighted at the bare hearing of it, are yet in a far greater Readiness and Preparation to make use of the same upon Occasion, than them selves can now be well aware of. For how many are there in the World, who can allow themselves, not only to be present at, but to seem and endeavour to be thought, to join also in such sorts of Petitions, as they acknowledge to be directly against their Duty, and in which they cannot inwardly and in their Hearts agree? Now as, it may be, there was a time, when such Men were far from believing, that ever they could have prevailed with themselves to make so large a step; so, having once advanced so far, 'tis not very easy for them, to know certainly, where they would stop at last; or how much farther still they might be carried on, by the same Temporal motives, upon a sufficient trial and occasion. For tho' totally to deny the Faith, and to change ones Religion so all at once, may appear at first very horrid and abominable, yet they who, against their Conscience, can now afford so deliberately to play the Hypocrites in any one particular, will, by degrees, be at last easily enough reconciled even to such a general Apostasy. The only safe-guard that can rationally secure us from any one, will also secure us from all hainous Transgressions; and that is the Consideration of God's having forbid the same. This Bulwark once thrown down, as it must needs be by those, who knowingly indulge themselves in the Habit of any one sin, and much more in the Habit of Hypocrisy, there is an open way made, for any other Wickedness to assault and take place with us. And they who, notwithstanding the confessed unlawfulness thereof, can find in their hearts to join in one forbidden particular, what can hinder but that they should do so in another, and so on in a hundred, till they come at last to the most scandalous height imaginable? The only reason why such Men are so apt to think that they should not do so, is only because they are now able, to look upon the extreme Horror of the thing without the Abatements and Disguises of prejudice; as being at present under no manner of Temptation thereto, from the like powerful motives of Worldly Fear or Interest. However, where all Men may safely take the Liberty (as all may if any) to communicate any where, or no where, if they please, this must necessarily put an end to all Church Discipline, and so at the same time, to all regular Communion.

But still, to all the foregoing ill Consequences of a more publick Nature, give me leave to add one or two more immediatly relating to the very Persons of such Offenders.

The

The first whereof is, That, besides their hazarding Eternity thereby, they are far from being sure, that by this means they can long secure to themselves even that Temporal Ease and Safety, which is the only thing they aim at: But have on the contrary great reason to fear, that such Hypocrisie will at length even in this World betray them to far greater Inconveniences, than what they hoped to avoid thereby. For tho' this course may for a while secure them from such dangers; yet when once their Hypocrisie comes to be discovered (as, first or last, it generally is) such Persons are most of all exposed, and abhorred by all Men. Who, whilst they are apt secretly to Venerate those that plainly profess their dissent from them, and are willing to suffer for the same; yet naturally treat and look upon such vile dissemblers with the highest detestation. And however in the mean time, for them to be obliged to act continually a most unnatural part; to have a constant Guard upon themselves, lest any unwary Word or Action should betray them; to force their Bodies (as Hypocrites must do) to be always drudging of it, without, and against their Souls; To lie under constant Fears and Apprehensions of a discovery, like a day of Judgment; all this must needs create a life sufficiently unpleasant, scarce worth the living, and cannot but be esteemed even in it self so Severe a Punishment, that whatsoever else can be got thereby, is a dear purchase. And yet after all, if ever they do chance to have their Hypocrisie detected, they can look for no other, than to be treated with the most extraordinary severities. For tho' (as I formerly observed) the greatest Tyrant must be for the present satisfy'd with a man's plain Denial of his Faith; yet, if afterwards by any chance trip, such a one can clearly discover, that he has been only mocked therein, what suitable Effects must then be expected to follow from the redoubled Rage and Fury of him, who finds, that, instead of a substantial Convert to his own Religion, he has been only Cheated and affronted with the mere out-side and Apparition of a Man, or rather a Snake in his Bosom, a most loathsome dangerous dissembler? Upon this account, as almost all Ages of the World ever did, so this also in which we live, does at present afford us, not far from home, a very pregnant Instance, with what a zealous and suspicious Eye Politicians justly think they have reason, to look upon such new pretended Converts, whose outward Compliances with them in matters of Religion seem wholly owing to such external force and fear. From whence also, by the way, may plainly appear the great Folly and Madness, of persecuting Men merely upon the account of Religion. Which is in effect no better, than to incur a great deal of guilt and Odium, and to be at a great deal of invidious Pains, to make a sort of People, whom themselves can never think fit, when all is done, to rely upon; nay, the most dangerous sort of Men, the least to be trusted, and the fittest to be rooted out of the World of any living therein; as being indeed the common Enemies to Mankind and Human Society in general. So that ineed such Proceeding is no other than first to Persecute without, and against all reason, that so they may have a just reason to persecute,

Again, in the second Place, another very great but most deserved Inconvenience more peculiarly attending the Persons of such Offenders, is, That they who have once imbibed and professed this most execrable Heresie, let them pretend to retract, nay, let them really repent and recant the same with never so much Earnestness and Sincerity; yet 'tis scarce possible, by all the means they can use to that purpose, either sufficiently to satisfy the Church, or to gain Credit with any other considering Person, that they are at length in good earnest. For they who have once publicly taught this Doctrine, or openly owned it as their avowed Judgment, that it is lawful, in any part, or in whole, to dissemble their Religion or Belief, and have already practised accordingly, may ever afterwards very justly be suspected, to be only repeating of the same Crime, actually making use of the same cursed sort of *Libertinism*, even in their very Retraction of it, and at the very time when they pretend to repent thereof. So that they who before rendered Words and Acti-

ons so wholly insignificant unto others, must now in this Case have made them no less unprofitable to themselves: Since unless they could give Men an immediate prospect of their Hearts, they can never be believed in any thing they may affirm concerning it; nor indeed in any thing else whatsoever upon their own Denial or Affirmation.

To conclude; Let but the same Liberty prevail also in Civil Affairs, (as it equally may and will; for Religion certainly is not the only thing in the World, with which we may thus make bold; but if we may Counterfeit that it self, there can then be nothing else in the World, which we may not also as lawfully dissemble) I say, of this libertine Principle should once generally take place in Civil Affairs and matters of ordinary Conversation, 'twould presently make as sad work in the Commonwealth as in the Church; that is, indeed, utterly confound the same, and destroy the very being of it. For tho' the World be bad enough as it is; yet such would be hereupon the Miserable Alteration of it, that every Man would feel the fatal Effects thereof, and be ready to desire, that the World it self might have a speedy Conclusion. And in the mean time, we should have reason to wish for it, as the far greater Privilege, that all Men had been made perfectly both deaf and dumb, since the contrary faculties so strangely perverted, would serve us only to do, and to receive Mischief by. What a sad State of Affairs must that be, wherein there could be no believing, or being believed, and consequently no free Intercourses, no Trading or Commerce with each other? no Government or Subjection? How wretched and deplorable would be our Case, if neither Promises nor Vows, nor the most solemn Oaths themselves could afford us any thing of the least security to be depended on? The whole World would thus become one continued Cheat, nothing but Deceiving, and being Deceiv'd. So that there could be no longer any living together, as now, in Cities or Towns, no, not so much as in private Families: but every Man would be forced, as much as he could, to withdraw himself from others, and each betaking himself to the Wilderness, endeavour to live separate and alone by himself in some Den or Cave of the Earth. And so farewell Civility it self, together with all the Benefits and very being of Humane Society. So that indeed, above all other Criminals or Traitors whatsoever, Governours, as they tender the publick Welfare, are obliged most vigorously to endeavour, to Suppress and Punish this sort of Offenders, as Persons guilty at once of Universal High-Treason against all Government it self; especially, when they find them not only practising but publicly teaching and maintaining the Lawfulness of such Diffimulation. And accordingly, all Wise Magistrates of what Age or sort soever, when ever they could sufficiently discover any Persons guilty of this dangerous Crime, have thought fit to censure them with the utmost Severity; not only as Enemies to Religion it self, without which no Government can be maintain'd, but as immediate and direct Enemies also to the Common Welfare of mankind and the very being of Human Society. Which shall be my Seventh Consideration.

C H A P. XIII.

The common Sense and Judgment of all unprejudiced Mankind of what sort forever constantly agreeing in the Condemnation of such Offenders and Practise, as a thing most Dangerous, Base, Unnatural, and Abominable.

When *Istegerdes* King of Persia commanded *Benjamin* a Christian Deacon, to deny the God he Worshipped, strong and unanswerable was the reasoning, by which he refused, saying; *They that desert you, O King, you deservedly put to death: what punishment then, think you, is he worthy of, who basely deserts his Creator?*

Among

Among the Ancient *Jews*, (not without the command of God himself for it) they who were found guilty of Idolatry, or any strange Worship, or had done any thing in appearance like it, which might justly be so Interpreted, were presently Stoned to Death by the Witnesses and all the People. And we find that when the Pagans had forced Swines Flesh into the Mouth of old *Eleezer* the Scribe, he presently Spat it out again. *And when they who had the charge of that wicked Feast, for the old acquaintance they had with the Man, taking him aside, besought him to bring Flesh of his own Provision, and such as was lawful for him to use, and make as if he did eat of the Flesh, taken from the Sacrifice, commanded by the King, that so he might escape Death; He refused the same, thus answering, like himself; It becometh not our Age in any ways to Dissemble., whereby many young Persons might think, that Eleezer being Four-score Years old and Ten, were now gone to another Religion.* 3. Mac. 6. 18.

In like manner, though it may be observed, that the *Jewish* People all along before, had but very little kindness for the *Samaritans*, upon the account of their Worshiping the Idols of their own Country, together with the God of *Israel*; yet this strangeness and hatred of theirs, seems to have been much improved, and grown to the greatest height imaginable, some time before and at our Saviours coming. The Reason of which is plain enough, if we do but a little consult History: For after the *Samaritans*, by the leave of *Alexander* the Great, had built for themselves a Temple on Mount *Gerizim*, like to that of *Jerusalem*; they presently began thereupon to magnifie themselves as now equal to the *Jews* in every thing; vaunting themselves for the Off-spring of *Joseph* the Father of *Ephraim*, and alike Worshipers of the true God. But soon afterwards, when *Antiochus* began to Persecute the *Jews* for their Religion, these *Samaritans* terrified thereat, presently changed their Note, plainly denying that they Worshiped God, but like other People, the Gods of the Heathen only; giving out likewise, that they were not *Israelites*, but *Sidonians*, and promising to dedicate their Temple it self to *Jupiter* of *Crete*. By which means they clearly escaped all the effects of that Tyrants Fury. Now this horrid Dissimulation of theirs, and so shameful denial of their Religion, seems to have been the true chief Reason, why the *Jews* so deservedly hated the *Samaritans*, that they willingly neither talked to, nor conversed with them; but shunned them upon all occasions, as a perfect abomination to them.

Now, though it be very true, That Christians have no express Command as the *Jews* had, to put to Death such Idolaters and Dissemblers; yet the wiser sort of Christian Princes also, sensible of the infinite danger to them of such Practises, have thought fit

sufficiently to shew both their Zeal and Severity in the like Cases.

That good and mild Emperour *Theodosius* made such severe Laws against the *Manichees* of his time, as may seem very strange to any one not well acquainted what kind of Persons they were, for their particular Behaviour.

We are to know therefore, that the *Manichees* were wont to insinuate and intermix themselves with the Orthodox Christians, that 'twas extremely difficult to distinguish them; whilst having no regard at all of Perjury it self, they scrupled not falsely to affirm and Swear themselves Catholics; and if at any time they happened to be discovered and convicted for *Manichees*, then presently counterfeiting Repentance, and outwardly feigning themselves to abhor that Heresy, they still continued inwardly what they were before. And that they might be no more found out, would assemble together with the Orthodox in their Churches, and presume also to partake with them even of the Holy Sacrament. So that *Theodosius* had a great deal of Reason to deal so severely as he did with this most dangerous lurking Sect of Miscreants, by taking care to send them all into perpetual Banishment, and ordaining withall, let them pretend themselves Penitents as much as they would, that they should never any more be admitted to the Communion of the Church, unless when they apparently lay a dying.

Baron. Ann.
al v. 4. 613
614.

After the same manner a great many of the *Jewish* Race, very considerable for Wealth and Power, and dispersed all over the Dominions of *Ferdinand* King of *Castile*, having been plainly discovered to have play'd the Hypocrites, in that, though they openly professed the Christian Faith, they did yet secretly retain and observe the *Jewish* Law and Ceremonies; That King did not only cause many of them, who still continued obstinate in the Crime to be burnt alive, but commanded the dead Bodies also to be taken out of the Graves, of such others of them, who died guilty of the same Wickedness. Tho' at the same time he suffered a very great Multitude of other *Jews*, to continue safe and undisturbed in *Spain*; because they fairly and openly observed the *Jewish* Institution, without any such Hypocrisy or Violation of the Christian Religion.

Camp. Ful-
gor. rerum.
memorabi-
lium. lib. 1.
p. 33.

Nor is it at all strange, to find Christian Magistrates thus affected, when even some Hereticks themselves have shewn a like just Indignation against such flattering Time-servers, and dangerous Dissemblers. To which purpose we have a very memorable Example in *Theoderichus*, or *Theodoric* King of the *Goths*, one of whose Servants, before greatly beloved and respected by him, supposing by this means, that he should still purchase more Favour with that Prince deserted the Orthodox Faith, and turned of the *Arian* Profession.

Bur

But *Theuderic* instead of being better pleased with him, presently commanded his Head to be cut off, saying, *Thou that dost not keep thy Faith towards God, how wilt thou ever behave thy self Conscientiously towards a Man?*

To proceed, the very *Turks* themselves, in this respect, are very Wise and Politick, who, though they grant a general sort of Indulgence and Toleration, to the Exercise of all Religions; yet, as with them Atheists are put to Death, so they are no less severe also against this sort of Hypocrites: For whosoever is known by them to be barely present with them at their Devotions in one of their *Mosques* (let the motive be what it will that carried him thither) must become a *Moselman* immediately, and be Circumcised forthwith in order to it, or else be sure to die for his prophane Hypocrisy and Affront.

But why should I alledge any of these Testimonies or Examples? When several of the wiser and more considering sort even of Heathens themselves, have sufficiently given us to understand, what kind of Apprehensions they had concerning those Persons, who either for meer fear or Favour, could be induced to change their Religion, or ashamed to own it. For though it cannot be expected that those very Persons, who could think fit to Persecute Christians, (as most of the *Roman* Emperours did) on purpose to make them so play the Hypocrites, should afterwards expressly reproach or condemn them for having done so; (since this would be no other than to reflect upon themselves, and to cast dirt in their own Faces) yet some few others of the Pagan Emperours, (as I shall anon shew) who happened to be more mild, and less of the Spirit of Persecution, have plainly enough declared, both how meanly they thought of such Dissemblers, and how honourably of those who remained constant in their Profession. And in the mean time, that the most eager Persecutors themselves had also the same thoughts of them, will, I think, be undeniable, if we do but well consider what must be their very chief-design in Persecuting. Now, to be sure, they could not be so Foolish, as once to hope by knocking out their Brains, to enlighten their Understandings, and that all the fears and torments in the World should really produce a different Perswasion of Mind, or make them in their Hearts believe any otherwise than they did before. And indeed, as these cruel Wretches could not see, so neither did they at all regard what Faith it was that Christians carried in their Hearts, so they did but keep it there secretly to themselves, (as some of them, you have heard, expressly so advised) and in the mean time deny the same with their Lips, or be sure never to declare it either by Words or Actions. This once effected, the most raging *Dioclesian* would desist, and require nothing farther. Accordingly, when *Pliny* Junior had consulted *Trajm*, what he should do with the Christians,

the Emperour thus answers; *He that denies himself to be a Christian, and makes this manifest indeed, that is, by Worshipping our Gods, though he has been formerly suspected, let him yet obtain Pardon upon Repentance.* Upon which account, Tertullian in his Apology against the Gentiles, thus smartly Expostulates with them; *You do not proceed with us according to the usual Form of Judging Criminals; but whilst you apply Tortures to others, who deny the Fact: they are accused of, to extort a Confession from them, Christians alone you Torment, to make them deny the same.* And again a little after, *The Man cries out, (saith he) I am a Christian, and he speaks therein truly what he is; But still you desire to hear what he is not: They whose Business it is to force out the Truth, from us alone endeavour to extort a Lye.* The Man saith, *I am that, which whether or no he is, you ask of him; Why do you still Rack him, to make him say the contrary? I confess, and you still Torment me; What would you do if I should deny? Others when they deny, you do not very easily believe: But to us, if we once deny, you presently give Credit.* Now what was the true Reason and Design of this Method of Proceeding? Did they delight to hear a Lye merely for its own sake, without any other Purpose or Advantage? Or could they think, that Pain alone should alter the Judgment and Understanding, as well as the Will? Either of these is certainly most unreasonable to suppose of them. But the true reason why the Pagan Persecutors rested so fully satisfied herewith, was because they were clearly sensible, that in gaining of this Point they gained all that was possible for them to effect, or could be well desired, even (so far) the utter Ruin and Destruction of that Religion, which they so endeavoured to root out and extinguish. For if they could once bring a Christian openly to deny his Faith, and to continue to do so, than which they well knew nothing was more contrary to the Nature of Christianity and all Religion, then they had a perfect conquest over the Man's Will and Resolution; and had brought him therein, to forego all that 'twas possible for him to part with; (for a Man's belief is not purely in his own Power, tho' the Profession of what he Believes is) all but only what he could not help the keeping of, and would (if he could) part with that also, rather than suffer Torment. Openly to disown his Religion, they saw plainly, was to forgo all the Benefits thereof, by the Man's violating his own Conscience, and keeping his inward Faith for no other purpose but to upbraid him: And in one Word, by bringing him to this, they made him cast all the Shame and Disgrace imaginable both upon himself and upon his Religion; which ever after, without true Repentance and Reconfession, could prove no farther serviceable either to the Man himself, or (through his occasion, and so far as he could hinder) to any other Person in the World besides. So that when all is done, no Man can so play the Hypocrite in, or with his Religion, without

being in good earnest, as to the Ruine of that, and his own Destruction

Nay, the Persecuting Heathen, concluded themselves, to have gained their Point in a great measure, if they could but any way so contrive the Matter, that a Christian might but seem or be thought, (tho' falsely) to comply with them. And accordingly Eusebius tells us, That in the Ninth Year of Dioclesian, many suffered Martyrdom, among whom there were some who underwent the trial without any Benefit or Advantage. For as one was thrust on by the violence of the Infidels, and brought by them to those unlawful Sacrifices, though the Man did not Offer, yet he was freely dismissed by them, as if he had Offered: So another, tho' he did not so much as come near nor touch any impure thing, yet the Heathen affirming, that he had Sacrificed, he did not contradict them, but silently went away. Another, cried out with a loud Voice that he utterly abominated all their Sacrifices; Another, that he was a Christian; Another that he never had, nor ever would Sacrifice. And yet all these by Soldiers placed there for that purpose, were violently smitten upon the Mouth and Face, and forced to hold their Peace, and then thrust away by main force. So great a matter did those Enemies of Piety esteem it, but any way to seem, or have it thought, that they had effected what they designed upon them.

Euseb. Hist.
Eccle. l. 8.
c. 3.

But to return again (as I promised) to some of the less Persecuting sort of Roman Emperours. Adrian (as I before remarked) in the Historian Flavius Vopiscus, Writes in a Stile of contempt and scornful Admiration at the ridiculous Levitie of those Basilidian Hereticks, whom he calls, some Christians of Egypt, in that they could change their Religion, as they saw occasion, now Worshiping with the Christians, anon with the Jews, and sometimes again with the Gentiles.

Again, in that Rescript of Antoninus Pius, forbidding any farther Persecution of Christians, published at Ephesus, in the Common Council of all Asia, and still extant in Eusebius, we may plainly perceive what censure of Disgrace that mild Emperour was ready to pass upon the contrary Behaviour, by that honourable character of Commendation, which he there bestows upon the admirable Constancy of sincere Christians. His Words are these; *Quibus hominibus jam ipsi gravem exhibetis Molestiam, &c.* Those Men to whom you now create such grievous trouble, accusing them as Impious and averse from the Worship of the Gods, that Religion of theirs which they plainly have, you do thereby very much confirm. For they much rather wish, that, being accused, they may suffer Death for their God, than enjoy Life. So that by their Lives, after this manner freely parted with, they reap a greater and much more illustrious Victory, than if they fulfilled the Commands, which you require to be observed by them.

Euseb. Hist.
l. 4. chap.
12.

But still, above all other Instances, nothing can be more apposite to this purpose, than both the Words and Actions of another Empe-

Empe-

Emperour, who, tho' Merciful to all, and far from Persecuting Christians, yet Lived and Dyed a Heathen; I mean *Constantius Chlorus*, the Father of *Constantine* the Great. For when *Dioctesian* and *Maximine* urged him, to reestabliſh the Pagan Rites and Counsellours, and to discharge all Christian Officers from his Court: This mild and prudent Prince, resolving to take this opportunity, of trying the Constancy and Fidelity of his Courtiers, made as if he would put the Order in Execution; and therefore, sending for all sorts of Persons about him, acquaints them with the pleasure of the Emperours, exhorting them to yield a suitable obedience thereto, by sacrificing to their Idols, and adding withal no small threatnings in case of refusal. Upon this, his Court was divided into two parts; The one consisting of such as had onely dissembled their Faith before, whilst they carryed Paganism in their Hearts, who very readily prepared themselves to Sacrifice: The other, of such as undervalued all things in Comparison of Christ; who by no Threats or Promises could be prevailed upon to comply. After this discovery first made, *Constantius* thinking fit, to make a true discovery also of his own real Intent and Judgement, presently Commanded all those Dissembling Time-servers to depart his Court, utterly denying, *That ever they should approve themselves faithful to him, who had been so insincere towards God himself: But he both retained and highly commended the other sort; not in the least doubting of their good Behaviour towards himself, when they had so well acquitted themselves in relation to the Deity.*

Such now was the Judgement of the best Emperours. Nor shall we find any of those to have been of a different opinion in this matter, who among the Heathens were justly esteemed Philosophers. *Themistius*, who as well deserved that Name, as any one that ever yet bore that Title, is well known, more than once, to expose and deride such Weather-cocks in Religion, who continually changing Colour with the Court, *Adored not God, but the Purple*; highly commending *Jovian*, upon this account, for granting a general Liberty, for every Man to exercise his own Religion without disturbance: By which means (as he assures him) he effectually put an end to that cursed Trade of dangerous Dissemblers and flattering Time-servers.

And long before him, 'twas one of the common Aphorisms of *Socrates*, *That every Man ought to endeavour to be really such a one, as he desires to seem, and would be thought to be.* And accordingly, when he was accused, for not believing those to be Gods, whom his Country-men Believed and Worshiped for such, all the defence he thought fit to make for himself, (which yet he esteemed sufficient) is grounded upon the general supposition of the Hainousness of Hypocrisie, and consequently that none acquainted with him could think him capable of so high a Crime.

For,

For, as his Disciple *Xenophon* assures us, all his answer before his Judges was no more than this; *This I very much admire, with what colour of Reason Melitus my accuser can say, That I do not think those to be Gods, whom this City thinks so, when both many others have, and Melitus himself too, if he had a mind to it, might have seen me Sacrificing to them upon the publick Altar.* Which tho' it confutes that common opinion, of his Dying a Martyr for the Belief of one God, does yet no less plainly demonstrate, how far he was from the late Doctrine of the *Leviathan*, and how abominable a thing he concluded it, for a Man to dissemble in Religion.

How extremely brave likewise and altogether free from Slavish Fear and Flattery was that of *Calanus* the Indian Philosopher, in his Letter to *Alexander the Great*, extant in *Philo Judeus*? I bear (*saitb ne*) *That your Friends advise you, to apply Force, and lay Violent Hands upon the Indian Philosophers, who were never yet acquainted, so much as in a Dream, with any thing of our matters. For you may indeed remove our Bodies from one place to another: But you cannot force our Souls, to do what they have no mind to. You may sooner make Stones and Logs of Wood to Speak. There is no King or Emperour in the whole World, that can compel us to do what we our selves have not decreed.*

Nay still, in the last place, (to insist no more upon Pagans, much less Philosophers of that kind) so naturally base and ignoble is it, for a Man to Lie, or to Dissemble, that some of those, who, one would think, should of all others be most void of all sentiments of Honour in such cases, yet, retaining some faint shadows thereof in Vain-glory, have had that Principle, strong enough in them, to hurrie them out of the World, rather than seem to incur so shameful an Imputation. For even dull Atheism it self, as it has had but too many Confessors, so has it not wanted also some few Martyrs, who have chosen to Die, rather than profess with their Lips, what they obstinately pretended, they could no waies in their Hearts Believe. For this was the very case of *Vaninus*, who was Burnt to Death at *Tholouse* upon that Score. we Read likewise of another amongst the Turks, who chose to Die upon the same account: Of whose Tragedy we have the particular relation in the worthy Authour of *THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TURKS*. Which examples of astonishing Govern. Madnes, are yet not onely parallel'd, but quite out done by those, Turks. p. 119. who, believing Christianity and the unspeakable eternal Rewards and Punishments it acquaint us with, can yet find in their Hearts to Dissemble, or deny their Faith, rather than undergo the short present Sufferings of a moment upon that account.

Thus you see what the Opinion has been concerning this Matter, of all sorts of the more impartial, whether *Jews* or *Christians*, whether *Hereticks*, *Turks* or *Pagans*; nay, partly, and upon supposition,

even

even of some Atheists. And as it is the sense of all the World besides, so I am perswaded, 'tis sometimes so also in the Self-condemned Minds of these very Hypocrites themselves. However, the time is most certainly a coming, when they shall be thorowly wakened into a quick and never-ending Sense of Shame and of Confusion upon this account. Which advances me to my Eighth and last Consideration, *viz.*

C H A P. XIII.

The unavoidableness of that infinite Shame and Misery, which according to the Eternal and unalterable Nature of Things themselves, must needs be the dreadful Portion of all such abominable Hypocrites and Dissemblers in the World to come.

HOW naturally sad must needs be the Condition of those who depart hence unmortify'd and full of the love of the World, and cannot tell how to part with such Desires and Affections, even in a State in which there will be no more World for them to enjoy; The same Persons also being (as I have already shewn) wholly void of all true Love of God, and of their Neighbours? How is it possible for them to enjoy any thing of the Heavenly State, (even tho' we could suppose them in such a Place as Heaven) where there is nothing else for them to Love besides God himself, and those that love him and are like him? So that ardent Love is the pure Air and very Life of Heaven, without having our Hearts thorowly endued with which blessed Habit and Affection, we are no more capable of that heavenly State, than it is here possible for us, to live without Breathing, or to breath without Air. Upon which account according to the very nature of Things, What good can they ever expect, who leave this World being themselves wholly unfurnished with all those Divine Qualifications, which are so absolutely necessary to capacitate Men for their entrance into the State of true Happiness, and to make them meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light? As the Apostle speaks, Col. 1. 12. The ill Habits we pass hence with, and want of the contrary Graces, will like natural Incapacities, be sure to consign us over to our proper Stations, and place us without any more adoe, on the left Hand with the Goats. Every wicked Man and Dissembling Hypocrite carries with him a whole Legion of Devils, of tormenting Sins and unmortify'd Lusts; any one

One of which is enough to unheaven Paradise, and to turn *Abraham's* Bosom it self into a place of no rest. Ill dispositions establish Hell within Men, and naturally lay the Foundation of their perpetual Misery, whilst they shall find such cursed Habits will prove those eternal Chains of Darkness, to fetter them below amongst Devils; where Sin shall be no more, as here, distinguished, but known by its true proper Name, Misery.

It is impossible that he should be finally miserable, who does not love something more than God; and 'tis no less impossible that he who does prefer any thing before God, should not be miserable, if he be continued at all in being. For to love God with all our Hearts, is our only Duty, and our greatest Happiness, and not so to love him, at once our greatest Sin and Misery. And 'twas certainly the deepest Sense of the true nature of Religion, and a strong effect of the great Sincerity of the Man himself, that made a Divine Poet of our own, break out into this Pious and most Pathetick Ejaculation; *My God, let me not love thee, if I love thee not.*

And indeed, our future Bliss it self will consist chiefly in our extatic love of God, and in perceiving how we love him, and are beloved by him: Gratitude and Thankfulness, and endless Love for Love, will be the Life of Heaven. And without attaining here to some eminent degree of this Love and Gratitude, our Souls can never be winged thither. Our Saviour therefore, who designed our everlasting Happiness, did in order to it, contrive the most effectual way, to excite our Love, by loving us first so well, as to lay down his Life for our sakes, that by his Precedent and Example, we might be even constrained so to love him again, and to express our Gratitude in such a degree, as to be, at least, willing and prepared to die for his Honour, rather than deny or dissemble our Faith. And as even now any good Man cannot reflect upon his own willingness thus to do, without some extraordinary overflowings of Joy and Satisfaction in it: So we shall hereafter infinitely more please our selves, and Triumph to all Eternity in the Remembrance and Consideration of our Readiness in this frail State, to Sacrifice our very Lives to our Redeemer, and and in perceiving how well God is pleased with that Sincerity of our Affections, and how acceptable the same is to our blessed Saviour. Whereas, were it possible that we should ever be admitted into those glorious Mansions, without such Love of God, and having proceeded so far in Gratitude, we should have nothing to support or qualify us, for our converse with and enjoyment of that infinite Fountain and God of Love: But bring horror of Conscience, perpetual Shame and Confusion of Face with us, even into Heaven it self.

For tho' in the sight and Presence of God will consist all Joy and Happiness; yet, can as without Holiness no Man see the Lord, so true Love and Sincerity is the only thing, which can enable us to sustain his Presence. Inasmuch that if a Man's own Heart con-

demns him in this Point, (as every Hypocrites must then be sure to do) it is impossible *He should have any Confidence towards God in that day of Judgment*: But nothing, on the contrary, besides Shame treasured up for himself against that Day of Shame.

Varenius
in descrip.
Regni Ja-
pon. p. 98.
& 99.

And how great a misery and severe Punishment this will indeed prove at last, to all those who depart out of this World impenitent Sinners, and vile Hypocrites, may (however faintly) be conjectured from present Examples, as well of some who have dyed with mere Shame, and that too upon no such very extraordinary occasion for that Passion, as also of very many others who have gladly chosen Death, much rather than suffer great temporal Disgraces any longer.

Besides, it may be observed, how naturally apt we are, to wax red, and be very much abashed, when we have at any time occasion to make but a few Speech to any considerable number of our fellow Mortals. And how much more are we still apt to be concerned, when we happen to be called in Question, and are to answer for our selves before any more August Assembly, even though we are sufficiently conscious to our selves of our own Innocency, as to what may be objected against us to our disparagement?

But what then, must we think, will be at last the dismal condition of those who are all over loaden with Guilt, [and knowing themselves monstrous by the blackest deformity of Sin, come to appear before the most dreadful Tribunal of the great God? There to have all that ever they have thought, said, or done, made clearly manifest, and there to Answer, and to receive Sentence, for all that has been amiss, in the Sight and Hearing, not only of one particular Assembly, City or Nation, but of all the Men now living upon the whole Face of the Earth: Nay, of all the several Generations of Men, that have ever, or shall ever live upon it, from the Beginning to the End of the World; to all which add also those innumerable Millions of Holy Angels, and (which is still more considerable than all the rest) the most Holy, but highly affronted Jesus, who would have been, and took such miraculous Pains, to be their Saviour, and shall then sit as their Judge: 'Tis enough almost to make a Man sink and die but seriously to think what will then be the Shame and infinite Consternation of all wretched Sinners, and especially of such provoking Hypocrites under those Circumstances. And yet alas, the thing it self will be much more dreadful than we can now apprehend, and is indeed beyond all Words to describe, beyond all possibility of our present Imagination.

Notwithstanding; of any thing that has ever yet been here in this World, methinks, what happened in the time of Con-
stan-

stantine the great, upon that Emperours embracing Christianity, and restoring Peace to the Church, seems most to resemble, how it shall be hereafter, at the last Day, with all such Offenders. Some faint glimpse of which we may be able to discover whilst we consider how the lapsed were at that time affected. For you might then have beheld whole multitudes of those, who before in the time of Persecution, had disgracefully denied their Faith, presently, upon this great alteration, under the most lamentable State and Condition. For how were they pricked to the very Hearts, when they perceived themselves not only wholly excluded from the Holy Communion, but denied all entrance into the Christian Churches; all Society with the Faithful? How were they confounded at the just Honours and profound Respects then paid to the noble Confessors, and dazzled at the lustre of their glorious Scars shining out, like so many several Constellations? And in the mean time, with what extreme Horror and Regret did they remember their own base Cowardice, and quite contrary Behaviour, which had rendred them so justly infamous and abhorred in the sight of all? So that perceiving themselves to have now no share in the common Joy, no kind of portion in the general Exultation and Triumphs of all other Christians, but perfectly overwhelm'd with the deepest Shame and Sorrow, they betook themselves to the Bishops, and lowly Prostrating themselves at their Feet, with whole showers of Tears, humbly acknowledged their hainous Crime, and in the most earnest, but submissive manner, entreated, that after most severe Penances and long Satisfactions perform'd, they might be at last admitted to the Peace of the Church, upon their true Repentance.

Repentance! That blessed Word sweetens and cheers up all with fresh Comforts and new Life, like a perfect Resurrection from the Dead. But alas, How widely different therefore will be the Case of those whose Shame and Regret shall be both infinitely greater, and sure to continue with them to all Eternity, having joined thereto absolute despair of better; whilst they shall perceive themselves wholly cut off from all hopes and possibility of Repentance and Forgiveness?

They who *glory in their Shame*, and they who are ashamed of what they ought most of all to glory in, are both of them in so high a degree guilty, that 'tis not very easy to determine which is indeed the most hainous: Yet methinks, in some respect, the last seems to be the more monstrous perversion of the two. For though the first gives that to Sin and to the Devil, which belongs to God alone and Goodness; yet the other, casting, (if possible) a still higher contempt upon both these, do after such a manner treat God and Religion, as they

ought to treat Sin and Satan. And therefore, as of all things in the World, nothing can be more truly Shameful, so there's nothing of which Men shall be hereafter more unconceivably ashamed of, and actually confounded at, than of their having been thus ashamed of their Religion.

So that should the great Judge, at the last Day, be wholly silent in the case, and leave things onely to their natural consequences; yet the guilty Hearts of such self-condemned Criminals, by an Insinuation as quick and intimate as the Sense of their own Souls is to them, would soon Read to them their fatal Sentence. And were it then possible for them, to make the least attempt of Entrance, their own Shame, like an evil Angel with a flaming Sword, would be sure to guard them from the Tree of Life, and for ever drive them from the Heavenly Paradise, thus lowly pronouncing their dreadful Doom.

Depart from hence, Vile Hypocrites, for ever far depart these Glorious and Happy Mansions, prepared for the Sincere and Faithful, and such of which none are ever capable of Inhabiting, but Souls Duely qualific'd, and such onely as are full of Divine Love and Zeal, and other Holy Preparations and Christian Habits, which are the onely Natural means of enabling any, to Live the Life of Heaven. After St. Peter's denial of him, one look from his Lord, even in his lowest Suffering, despised Condition, was sufficient to make him go out, and Weep bitterly: But now since he sets in his glorified Estate, as Judge of the whole World, and Cloathed with all the Majesty of Heaven, how will you be able to bear for ever, nay but one Moment, to look upon, or receive a look from him, whom you now your selves to have so highly Despised, and finally deny'd, without Repentance? Besides, are glorious Saints and Martyrs, who, for the Love of God and their Religion, *Loved not their Lives even unto Death*, are they fit Company for such loathsome Dissemblers and Apostates? What Pleasure or Delight are you able to take in a Society so infinitely different in all their qualities and dispositions? Nay, with what other Face, beside that of absolute Confusion, can you look upon the now dazzling Countenances of them, who, to you, alwaies were before, (and now are, than ever, much more) *Grievous even to behold*? Depart therefore, according to the just Summons of your own Confusion, into the Dark and far distant, but to you suitable Regions of everlasting Contempt and Shame; the proper Dwelling of Apostate Angels, of your Fellow-hypocrites and Unbelievers, and of other cursed Deniers, Blasphemers, and Apostates.

Nor let any one fondly suppose it possible, for such Sinners then, as now, still to put on a brazen Forehead, or to silence this Voice of Shame, or remain void thereof through the like brutish Stupidity and Inconsideration which now possesseth them.

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For Mens Dreams will then be at an end, all their Mists dispelled, and disguises taken away, their Eyes be open'd to See things as they are, and they forced to consider and clearly apprehend all those essential reasons and inseparable Circumstances, which render the nature of their Sin so much above all things truly shameful. They shall then be no longer able not to discern, how miserably they have abused and cheated their own precious Souls, debased their Nature, and rendred themselves Deformed. They shall then plainly see, how wholly their Sin was of their own choice, through their own fault, and how certainly they might have help'd it. They shall likewise clearly perceive, what height of the most abominable Ingratitude their offence argues and proceeds from, and with what prodigious folly and Madness it has been all along accompanied. In like manner, all the causes of their former Imprudence shall then wholly cease and be removed; the expedients they here made use of to keep themselves void and insensible of Shame, shall have then no more place, nor be any farther serviceable to the former Purposes; but be turned at last only to encrease their endless Confusion. For though whilst Men are here, and have still an opportunity of proceeding farther, in the enjoyments of forbidden sensual Pleasures; long Custom in the way of Sin, does so reconcile them to it, that they can now follow the same, free from their first Heart-smittings, and the Rebukes of their own Minds, and without being sensible of any Impressions of Shame: yet then, when they can properly Sin no more, but come to answer for their Offences, their ill Habits will most of all Gall and severely reproach them; so that thorowly awakened with their sensitive Smart, to consider how long and securely they have formerly wallowed in their Mire, Conscience will be sure to redouble its force, and to the full revenge of it self upon them, for all their former rising of it, and the Worm that shall never dye gain thereby so many more stings of intollerable Shame and Sorrow. Again, all false Principles and corrupt Doctrines of Men, by the help of which they were here enabled to continue in their Hypocrisy, or the Commission of any other Sin, without Shame, can then have no farther place in their Minds; Men shall be no longer able to continue Infidels or Misbelievers: But all shall there clearly understand how grossly they have formerly been mistaken, and how directly contrary they have acted, to their Duty and their Happiness, and how easily and certainly they might have seen as much, had they not willfully suffered their Eyes to be blinded by the Prejudices of some vile Lust or other, or through their most unreasonable admiration of some Idol Teacher of their own setting up, and more depending upon
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his Authority, than upon the express plain Word of God to the contrary. Farthermore all those Flattering Excuses, or Defences, by which Dissemblers now endeavour to conceal their Shame, and to countenance and encourage one another in the same wicked Courses, shall then have an end, and be turned only into so many bitter Cursings and mutual Accusations of each other, and of themselves, whilst all their Faces shall be covered with most deserved Shame for ever.

Lastly, all those sensual Objects and Delights, in the enjoyment of which the fond Hypocrite did so far place his Happiness, that as long as he could have the same continued to him, he was able to contemn all Shame, shall then be far removed, and he, being made incapable for ever of any such Pleasure or Enjoyments, have nothing else to fill and take up his Mind, but the tormenting Consideration of his Sin and Shame and endless Misery.

To all which, let me now only add this following Caution; Let not any one, (as most are to apt to do) think of what I have been last discoursing, as of things uncertain, or at a great distance from them. For as the whole World of our Ancestors are long since gone that Journey, so there's no Man amongst us of any considerable Age, but has sufficient occasion to consider, that most of those with whom he has been acquainted, are already gone before him into that World of Spirits; and we see others still daily a going thither. And as much strangers as we now make our selves to that future State, or that to us, there's nothing else keeps us here, or detains us from being there also, besides a little Breath, which we carry in our Nostrils, and which will soon expire for ever. There's nothing therefore of which we can be more certain, than that in a very short time we shall all, one after another, try the grand Experiment of this Matter, to our endless Happiness or Misery; and ought with the greatest seriousness and Application to prepare our selves accordingly.

So that now summing up the whole force of all the former Considerations together, within this narrower compass, I shall thus conclude.

C H A P. XV.

The Conclusion.

UNLESS we can find in our Hearts to prefer the vilest of Hereticks, and the worst of Atheists, before the most glorious Saints and Martyrs; the Doctrines of the *Leviathan* before the Precepts of Christ and his Apostles; and *Simon Magus* shall rightly be adjudged more Orthodox than *Simon Peter*: unless to be ashamed of Christ and his Religion be indeed to Glorifie him; to deny him be to confess him before Men, and to shew a base cowardly Fear, be indeed to exert a genuine Faith, and an Argument of true Christian Fortitude; unless grossly to lie, and shamefully to dissemble may be allowed to commence Virtues, and become requisite Zeal, and true Christian Simplicity: In short, unless all these, and a thousand other monstrous Contradictions can be reconciled together; then such dissembling Time-servers can never expect any other than to follow their beloved Doctrines to the place from whence they came, even to the Regions of the Prince of Darkness, and to have their Eternal Portion with their Brethren the Hypocrites and Unbelievers.

But if it be indeed so, That the only true Wisdom consists in taking care by any means, to keep ones self in a whole Skin; if it can be clearly demonstrated, That the Doctrine of the Cross is indeed no better than down right Foolishness; and that they who lay down their Lives here for Christs sake, shall lose them Eternally hereafter; if all the Primitive Martyrs are to be condemned for the greatest Fools and Mad-men, and Self-murderers; and all the wisest Governors of the Church in all Ages, are to be accounted Foolish and Tyranical, in the severe discipline they maintained, and the Penalties inflicted upon the lapsed; nay, if Heaven it self also could be mistaken, in the extraordinary and miraculous Inflictions upon such Offenders; if it can be made out, that God has no right to any thing at all of us, but only a little of a false rotten Heart, and that we are not obliged to glorifie him with our Bodies as well as with our Souls; If it be possible to reconcile Light and Darkness, the Service of God with that of *Mammon*; then also may the Thief that mocked him upon the Cross, as well as he who confessed him, be with Christ in

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Paradise; and then the Bosom of *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful may prove a fit Recepatle for Scorners and Unbelievers.

And verily, when there shall be no communion of Saints, neither on Earth, nor yet in Heaven; when Hypocrisy comes to serve instead of Sincerity, and the luke-warm *Laodicean* temper shall become of all others the most acceptable to the Almighty; when Heaven shall be quite void of Charity, and of all other Graces; when it shall be possible to enjoy God, without loving him, or being in any proportion like him; when God can hate Truth, and delight in the contrary; in a Word, when he can deny himself, and cease to be any longer God; then also will the great Gulf be quite unfixed, and then, and never before then, may such vile Libertines as we have been discoursing of, expect to see the Lord, and enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Since all this therefore is so absolutely true and certain, what height of Madness is it for the fond Hypocrite to imagine it possible for him, after this manner, to mock and deceive his Maker? When by so endeavouring, he only turns all that lame Service of his into mere drudgery, which when sincerely performed is the most perfect Freedom; and wholly depriving himself of all that present Joy and unspeakable Satisfaction, which sincerity even now affords, and to which nothing in this Life can be comparable, does at the same time also render himself for ever incapable of the happiness of the World to come, and fits himself only for, and deliberately seems to chuse everlasting Misery. For he who thus offends against the first Commandement; *Thou shalt have no other Gods but me*, is guilty of the breach of all, and can never perform any of the rest to any purpose. Nor is it yet so easy a matter as some imagine, to be able truly to profess with holy *David*, *I have said unto the Lord thou art my God*; Whilst yet upon this real Ability, or the contrary, does naturally depend all our true present as well as future, either Happiness or Misery. Consider then fond Wretches, what it is you part with, and for what. Consider now in time, what thou art a doing, O Politick Mad-man, who thus vainly endeavourest to compound the Matter between God and Mammon. And then tremble thou Earth, *And be astonished O ye Heavens at this*, that ever any People should be so sottish, as to commit two such Evils; to forsake him* who is the Fountain of living Water; and to bew out to themselves Cisterns, broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water. Think, O serious think! What it is now falls thee so fast aslip in thy fatal Lethargy, and for the sake of which alone thou canst be so well contented to run so great a Hazard, and of so infinitely miserable Consequence. Is it not then the Love
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of the World, and the vain pursuit of sensual Pleasures which now stupifie the Mind? That *World which passeth away and the Lusts thereof; that Life which is a meer Vapour*; those vain Enjoyments of which thou must very shortly take thy Eternal Farewel, and be capable of relishing the same no more for ever. Is it fit that thy divine Soul, made for and capable of so high things, should be continually depressed and fettered, and made a perfect Slave to thy Body? To that Body of thine, which in it self is of no better a Nature than the Flesh of those brut Creatures, which thou daily destroy'st and feed'st on, to keep they own lump of Clay together and from mouldering. That which thou didst eat to Day, was yesterday or the Day before, as compleat an Animal (bareing thy reasonable and immortal Soul, which thou makest no use of) as thy self, and no less capable of enjoying the same sensual Pleasures, which alone thou art apt so much to pursue and doat on; and a few Years at most, will certainly put an end to thy Dream; when all that can be now seen of thee shall be dissolved, and fall into Ashes and Corruption; and all those vain Trifles and poor Enjoyments, which now take up thy Head and Heart, signifie no more to thee than if thou hadst never been; unless only to encrease thy Torments, in a too late sense of thy most prodigious Guilt and Folly, whilst thou remembrest them. This will e're long be thy Case, and may be so, for ought thou knowest, before to Morrow. So that there is really at this very time, nothing betwixt thee and Hell, but only the slight Partition of a little thin Breath, which ten thousand things may easily obstruct; insomuch that 'tis a very great Miracle that thou shouldest be able to live at all, but nothing strange, that thou shouldest cease to do so. If thou canst make a shift to lay aside all these thoughts, and keep thy self insensible of any such thing for the present, and compose thy self to Sleep and Security; yet thy danger is really the same, whether thou art apprehensive of it or no: Nay indeed, infinitely greater and more inevitable upon this very account of thy not considering it: For thou wilt be shortly forced to consider, (though too late) whether thou wilt or no, in that State, where Men can continue no more Atheists or Hypocrites; and when thou awakest, find thy self sur-rounded with Devils and everlasting burnings.

And now, let such hardned Miscreants (if they can still find in their Hearts to do so) pursue their wonted Course, and betake themselves to their only best Argument against this, by scornfully laughing, for a Moment, at all these Matters, till woful Experience shall change the Scene with them, and sadly convince them of their Folly. In the mean tim, as for all those who by the Grace of God, are for the present far bet-

ter disposed and qualified, as ever they desire to stand fast, and still escape the fatal Contagion, so let them carefully avoid the Example, the Doctrines, nay, as much as well they can, even the company of such double Minded Wretches, and desperate Dissemblers. Whilst all good Christians will be ready, most devoutly to join with me, in those Excellent Prayers of our Holy Mother the Church.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men; Grant unto thy People, that they may love the thing which thou Commandest, and desire that which thou dost Promise, that so among the sundry and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may surely there be fixed, where true Joys are to be found. Give us Grace, that being not like Children carried away with every blast of vain Doctrine, we may be established in the truth of thy Holy Gospel. Grant us such Strength and Protection, as may support us in all Dangers, and carry us through all Temptations: Graft in our Hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true Religion, and the most hearty Sincerity therein, without which whosoever liveth is counted Dead before thee; nourish us with all Goodness, and of thy great Mercy keep us in the same: That thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things Temporal, that we finally lose not the things Eternal; Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Lord and Saviour. Amen.

F I N I S.

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